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Italian competition authority investigates alleged wine bottle cartel

AGCM investigates major manufacturers for alleged price fixing

Monday, November 13, 2023



Italy's Autorità Garante della Concorrenza e del Mercato (AGCM) has initiated a comprehensive investigation into a suspected cartel among several prominent wine bottle manufacturers. This probe, involving key industry players such as Berlin Packaging Italy Authority, Bormioli Luigi, O-I Italy, and others, aims to unravel the extent of possible collusion in setting glass bottle prices, a critical component in Italy's

robust wine industry.

The investigation was spurred by multiple reports hinting at coordinated efforts among these companies to manipulate market prices for glass wine bottles. Notably, these allegations emerged through the AGCM's whistleblowing platform and from concerned industry stakeholders like Filiera Italia and Prosecco producer Bottega.

The AGCM, in collaboration with the Special Antitrust Unit of the Guardia di Finanza, has executed inspections at the headquarters of the implicated firms and related entities. Assovetro, the National Association of Glass Industry, has also come under scrutiny in this extensive investigation.

The allegations suggest a concerning pattern of behavior among the manufacturers. Reports indicate that from at least 2022, these companies may have engaged in coordinated actions to raise the prices of glass wine bottles simultaneously, thereby disrupting the competitive landscape. This coordination is believed to have manifested in similarly structured price increase notifications sent out by the companies during March and September of the previous year.

Should these allegations be substantiated, they represent a significant breach of competitive practices, potentially impacting a wide range of stakeholders in the food and beverage industry, notably those relying on glass packaging. The companies under investigation, including global players like Verallia Italia, part of the world's third-largest food and beverage packaging firm, could face serious repercussions if found guilty of anti-competitive practices.

The AGCM has not yet drawn any conclusions but emphasizes the seriousness of these allegations. The ongoing investigation serves as a reminder of the authority's vigilance in safeguarding competitive practices in Italy's dynamic market sectors, particularly in areas as culturally and economically significant as the wine industry.

As the investigation unfolds, the AGCM is expected to thoroughly examine the evidence, evaluate the extent of the alleged collusion, and determine the appropriate response to ensure fair market practices are upheld. The outcome of this investigation could have far-reaching implications for the glass packaging industry and the wider food and beverage sector, both in Italy and internationally.