

22nd February 2000 : Practices implemented in the sector for fruits and vegetables

Published on April 14, 2004

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In a decision dated 22nd February 2000, the *Conseil de la concurrence* ruled on a referral by the *Fédération française des importateurs de fruits et légumes* (French Federation of Fruit and vegetable Importers), which had lodged a complaint regarding actions undertaken by groups of strawberry producers.

In 1993, the *Coordination rurale du Lot-et-Garonne* (Lot-et-Garonne Rural Coordination Organisation) had exerted pressure on fruit and vegetable traders, in an effort to deter them from acquiring supplies of strawberries from Spain.

It had organised boycott action against imports of Spanish strawberries, by carrying out checks on merchandise in warehouses and shops, and by threatening to destroy merchandise. It had also circulated letters addressed to distributors, in which it fixed a minimum retail price for French strawberries, and pressure was exerted on distributors who chose not to respect the price directives. These initiatives took place within a context characterised by violent action taken against Spanish imports and several shops.

In its decision, the *Conseil* observed that the actions undertaken by the *Coordination rurale*, during the crucial period when the price of French strawberries is much higher than that of strawberries imported from Spain, had the principal result of obstructing the free determination of prices for a consumer product by market forces.

The *Conseil* found that by imposing retail prices and boycotting imports, the *Coordination rurale du Lot-et-Garonne* had obstructed price drops, prevented other companies from accessing the market and acutely restricted trade

between Member States of the European Union. Consequently, the *Conseil* fined the organisation a total of 150,000 FF.

> ***Decision n° 00-D-01 relative to practices implemented in the sector for fruits and vegetables***



> ***See decision of the Paris Court of Appeal (17th October 2000)***