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Ex-supermarket staff gets 5 years for \$9m fraud over food expiry labels

27 March 2013

A former employee of a supermarket chain, charged by the ICAC, was today (Wednesday) sentenced to five years' imprisonment at the District Court for his role in a \$9 million fraud scam in relation to the purchase of food expiry labels.

Cheung Ying-tat, 35, a former senior production coordinator of PARKnSHOP, earlier pleaded guilty to one count of fraud, contrary to Section 16A of the Theft Ordinance.

In sentencing, Judge Susana D'Almada Remedios remarked that the offence committed by the defendant was deliberate, premeditated and lasted a long period of time.

The judge reprimanded the defendant for breaching the trust placed in him by his then employer.

The judge added that the starting point of seven and a half years was reduced by one-third to five years after taking into account his guilty plea.

The case arose from a corruption complaint. Subsequent ICAC enquiries revealed the above offence.

The court heard that at the material time, the defendant was employed by PARKnSHOP as a senior production coordinator posted to the supermarket's fresh food distribution centre in Sheung Shui.

As required by law, "Use By" expiry labels had to be stuck onto certain categories of fresh food processed by the centre.

The centre had been using labels compatible to electronic labeling guns. Upon the defendant's arrangement, a trading company became a label supplier of PARKnSHOP in 2007.

Between August 7, 2007 and December 14, 2010, the defendant placed 521 purchase orders with the trading company for almost 117 million pieces of "Use By" labels, the court heard.

However, such labels were not suitable for use at the centre. Upon receipt of those labels, the defendant stored them at the centre and disposed of them afterwards.

As a result, PARKnSHOP paid a total of over \$9.1 million to the trading company, the court was told.

PARKnSHOP has rendered full assistance to the ICAC during its investigation.

The prosecution was today represented by prosecuting counsel Edwin Choy, assisted by ICAC officer Eric Cheng.

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