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A PUBLIC STATEMENT

27th October 2017

The Managing Director of Mediterranean Growers Ltd Diego Pariotti, UK branch of Conserve Italia owner of CIRIO brand, has issued the following statement in relation to recent newspaper reports regarding Cirio and their parent company Conserve Italia in relation to exploiting migrant workers and the death in July 2015 of a farm worker.

“Exploitation of any workers is truly abhorrent to us, and this case has again tragically highlighted that these practices are still continuing in today’s modern society, which is appalling. And while we agree that these cases need be brought to the attention of the public and authorities, we do not believe that sacrificing the excellent reputation of a 160-year-old brand and a highly ethical company like Conserve Italia, via a tenuous link, is the right and proper way to do this.

Conserve Italia, one of Europe’s largest agri-food companies, associates over 14,000 Italian farmers. As such, we have a strict co-operative ethic code and vigorous quality controls in place that manage every process throughout the supply chain, including the employment and treatment of workers by our co-operative farmers. Conserve Italia are at the forefront of pushing for greater workers rights and conditions and as such, work closely with government ministers in Italy to push through new legislation to stop any further vile treatment like this happening in the future.

Conserve Italia receives and processes 350,000 tons of tomatoes in its factories every year.

The tomatoes processed in the factories are 85% sourced from our co-operators. The remaining 15% is purchased on the market through supply contracts with officially recognised Tomato Growers Organisations, using strict general contracts agreed with the Association of Tomato Growers in the centre and south of Italy, who negotiate the price and delivery conditions.

Specifically in relation to this story, Conserve Italia signed a purchasing contract with Pomoidea (Tomato Growers Organisation) in April 2015 for the supply of 300 tons (0.001 per cent of total raw material processed) of cherry tomatoes to be delivered through the cooperative named Terre di Federico. This cooperative supplied those tomatoes from an agricultural company named De Rubertis Rita.

The immigrant worker from Sudan worked for De Rubertis Rita and tragically died in July 2015, during the tomato harvesting process. De Rubertis Rita was found not to be complying with the laws regulating his employment. Conserve Italia learned this news from newspapers and immediately stopped any relationship with the tomato grower having received only one delivery of tomatoes.

The purchasing contract signed by Conserve Italia with Pomoidea demanded that they comply with all laws and regulations in place for employment, including security, health, social security and welfare plus including assistance for immigrant workers.

In addition, De Rubertis Rita signed a declaration that guaranteed to respect all fundamental principles of social responsibility, in particular to guarantee health and security of its employees, and to comply with all laws in place for working hours and salary.

Conserve Italia has always operated in respect of all legal requirements, insisting its suppliers do the same. It is important to state that Conserve Italia has not got the power of random inspections with these companies outside of the co-operative. Random inspections and compliance are the responsibility of State Police and all relevant Government offices responsible for making sure that there is full adherence regarding compliance with current legislation.

Conserve Italia is taking legal steps to protect its interests against the ex-supplier De Rubertis Rita claiming damages in court and to protect its reputation as the most ethical company in this business.

Conserve Italia is ready to open its doors to any customer or media that would like to verify the above declared statement.

Conserve Italia would like to assure all its consumers that it will continue to process tomatoes supplied by its 14,000 co-operators through the collaboration of its 3,000 employees in complete respect of ethical principals and environmental sustainability.

Our 'seed to table' positioning, i.e. the fully certified-ethical-sustainable-integrated supply chain is, and will always be, our strength, our best value, our guarantee of genuiness, quality and safety for the final consumers all around the world."

Diego Pariotti

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