26 March 2015: Bakery flour

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The Autorité de la concurrence fines 3 millers for anticompetitive agreements on increases in the price of flour sold to craft bakeries.

> Version française

The *Autorité de la concurrence* issues today a decision whereby it fines Axiane meunerie, Minoteries Cantin and Grands Moulins de Strasbourg a total of 1.1 million euros for having reached anti-competitive agreements on the price of flour sold to bakers in 2007[1] .

The details of the fines imposed are as follows:

Axiane Meunerie SAS	€300,000
Minoteries Cantin SAS	€320,000
Grands Moulins de Strasbourg SA	€518,000

The *Autorité* has not fined numerous other mills on the grounds of lack of evidence of their participation in the anticompetitive agreement.

The millers met to discuss prices

The evidence seized during the dawn raids carried out as part of the packaged flour investigation showed that another agreement had also been established in the sector of flour sold to craft bakeries.

Examination of the evidence indicated that on 11 June 2007, representatives of the mills in question held a meeting, in the specific context of the sharp increase in wheat prices of the year 2007, to decide on a target for price increases in flour sold to craft bakeries.

Prohibited practices but on a limited scale

The *Autorité* recalls that horizontal agreements between competitors are prohibited. In the case in question, these three millers, by agreeing on similar price increases, distorted normal competition to the detriment of the bakers.

However, in particular given the limited market share of the millers concerned (8% in volume at the time in question) and the short duration of the agreement (6 months), the scope of the damage is limited.
Consequently, the *Autorité de la concurrence* has ordered moderate fines totalling 1,138,000 euros. It has furthermore reduced Axiane meunerie's fine in view of the financial difficulties that the company is currently undergoing.

[1] This case results from a separate investigation arising from the proceedings on packaged flour which was the subject of a judgement by the Autorité in 2012 (see press release of 13 March 2012) and which was brought to the Autorité's attention following a leniency application.

> For more details on this case, consult the full text of decision 15-D-04 of 26 March 2015 on practices in the craft bakery sector.

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> See decision of the Paris Court of Appeal (22 September 2016)