



Department of Justice

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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**JUSTICE DEPARTMENT FILES CRIMINAL AND CIVIL CHARGES IN
CONSPIRACY TO FIX PRICES OF TAMPICO FIBER**

Fiber Used To Make Consumer and Industrial Brushes

WASHINGTON, D.C. -- A Netherlands-based seller of tampico fiber -- used to make bristles in such items as common household scrub brushes and brooms -- was charged today with conspiring to fix import and resale prices, and to allocate the sales volume of tampico fiber in the United States. The Department filed civil and criminal charges concerning different parts of the alleged conspiracy.

In addition to household brushes, a wide variety of consumer and industrial brushes contain tampico fiber, a vegetable fiber, imported primarily from Mexico. The industry generates \$4-5 million in annual sales revenue.

In a one-count criminal case filed in U.S. District Court in Philadelphia, the Department of Justice's Antitrust Division charged A&L Mayer Associates, Inc., with conspiring with others to suppress and eliminate competition in the sale of tampico fiber from January 1990 to April 1995. The criminal conspiracy

(MORE)

consisted of an agreement to fix the prices and allocate the sales of tampico fiber imported into and sold to brush manufacturers in the United States. A&L Mayer Associates, Inc., through its United States distributor, sold approximately \$10 million of tampico fiber in the United States during the 5 year conspiracy.

The Department also filed a civil complaint and consent decree, that if approved by the court, would settle the civil suit. The complaint alleged resale price maintenance, as well as price-fixing and sales volume allocation. The consent decree would prohibit the defendants from agreeing with any other processor or distributor of tampico fiber to, among other things, fix the import or resale prices of tampico fiber or allocate sales volumes, markets, or customers in the United States. It would also prohibit the defendants from suggesting or establishing resale prices for their distributors.

Anne K. Bingaman, Assistant Attorney General in charge of the Antitrust Division, said "today's action will help restore competition and help bring lower prices to all consumers, from the biggest business to the smallest household."

Today's charges resulted from a federal grand jury investigation of price fixing in the tampico fiber industry. The case was filed by the Antitrust Division's Philadelphia Field Office with the assistance of the Federal Bureau of Investigation. The investigation is continuing and the FBI has detailed a Special Agent to work on the matter.

Named in today's lawsuits was, A&L Mayer Associates Inc., a

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Netherlands-based corporation with offices in Hartsdale, New York. Also named were two of Mayer's affiliates, Fibras Saltillo S.A. de C.V., a Mexican Firm, which is the sole supplier of tampico fiber sold by Mayer Associates and one of the two largest suppliers of processed tampico fiber in the world, and A&L Mayer, Inc., located in Hartsdale, New York.

The maximum penalty for a corporation upon conviction of a violation of the Sherman Act is the greatest of a \$10 million fine, twice the pecuniary gain the corporation derived from the crime, or twice the pecuniary loss caused to the victims of the crime.

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