

Department of Justice

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ROCHESTER MAN, FORMER EMPLOYEE OF MO BETTER MINI MART, PLEADS GUILTY TO FOOD STAMP FRAUD

ROCHESTER, N.Y.-- U.S. Attorney William J. Hochul, Jr. announced today that Saleh Baabad, 37, of Rochester, N.Y., pleaded guilty to redemption of food stamp benefits that have been illegally transferred before U.S. District Judge Charles J. Siragusa. The charge carries a maximum penalty of five years in prison and a fine of \$250,000.

Assistant U.S. Attorneys Tiffany H. Lee and Grace Carducci, who are handling the case, stated that between January 2009 and May 2009, the defendant, while working at the "Mo Better Mini Mart" located at 422 Jefferson Avenue in Rochester, transferred food stamp benefits for less than their full value from beneficiaries in exchange for cash. Baabad did this by swiping the food stamp access device cards through the electronic funds transfer terminal installed at Mo Better Mini Mart.

Food stamp benefits are issued by the Food and Nutrition Service of the United States Department of Agriculture through New York State social service agencies to eligible beneficiaries. The beneficiaries are required to purchase eligible food items with the food stamp benefits.

The plea is the culmination of an investigation on the part of Immigration and Customs Enforcement, Homeland Security Investigations, under the direction of Special Agent in Charge James C. Spero, and the United States Department of Agriculture, Office of the Inspector General.

Sentencing is scheduled for January 7, 2013 at 4 p.m. before Judge Siragusa.

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