

Garlic smugglers make millions

STOCKHOLM, SWEDEN: Two British men are believed to have made millions of euros in just over a year by smuggling Chinese garlic from Norway into Sweden, a prosecutor in Gothenburg said.

Something didn't "smell right" for authorities in June 2010, when a truck full of garlic was intercepted in the Bohuslaen region, near the Norwegian border.

The trail led them to a garlic smuggling duo who are believed to have made millions by avoiding European Union tariffs.

"You bring the garlic into Norway saying it's for your own consumption and then you take it into Sweden," said prosecutor Thomas Ahlstrand.

Between February 2009 and June 2010, the men are believed to have skirted €10.6m in tariffs and fees by bringing garlic into the Scandinavian country from Norway, which is not a member of the EU.

However, the amount of money pocketed by the two men would have been lower, since they had to pay Norwegian duties as well as higher transportation costs than if the product had been brought straight into the EU, he added.

The prosecutor asked a Gothenburg district court on Wednesday (9 January) to remand the men in custody in absentia, but so far no international arrest warrant has been issued for the two, whose names were not disclosed.

"This sometimes happens with different types of food," Ahlstrand said, citing rice as another product that had been smuggled into Europe.

Last month, British customs officials named a garlic smuggler as one of the country's worst tax cheats for 2012.

Murugasan Natarajan was sentenced to six years in prison after evading around £2m in customs duty while importing Chinese garlic, the agency said on a list published on photo sharing website Flickr.

The man, who is now on the run, claimed to be importing ginger but investigators found that the containers he used were the wrong temperature, it said.

Source: *AFP* via I-Net Bridge