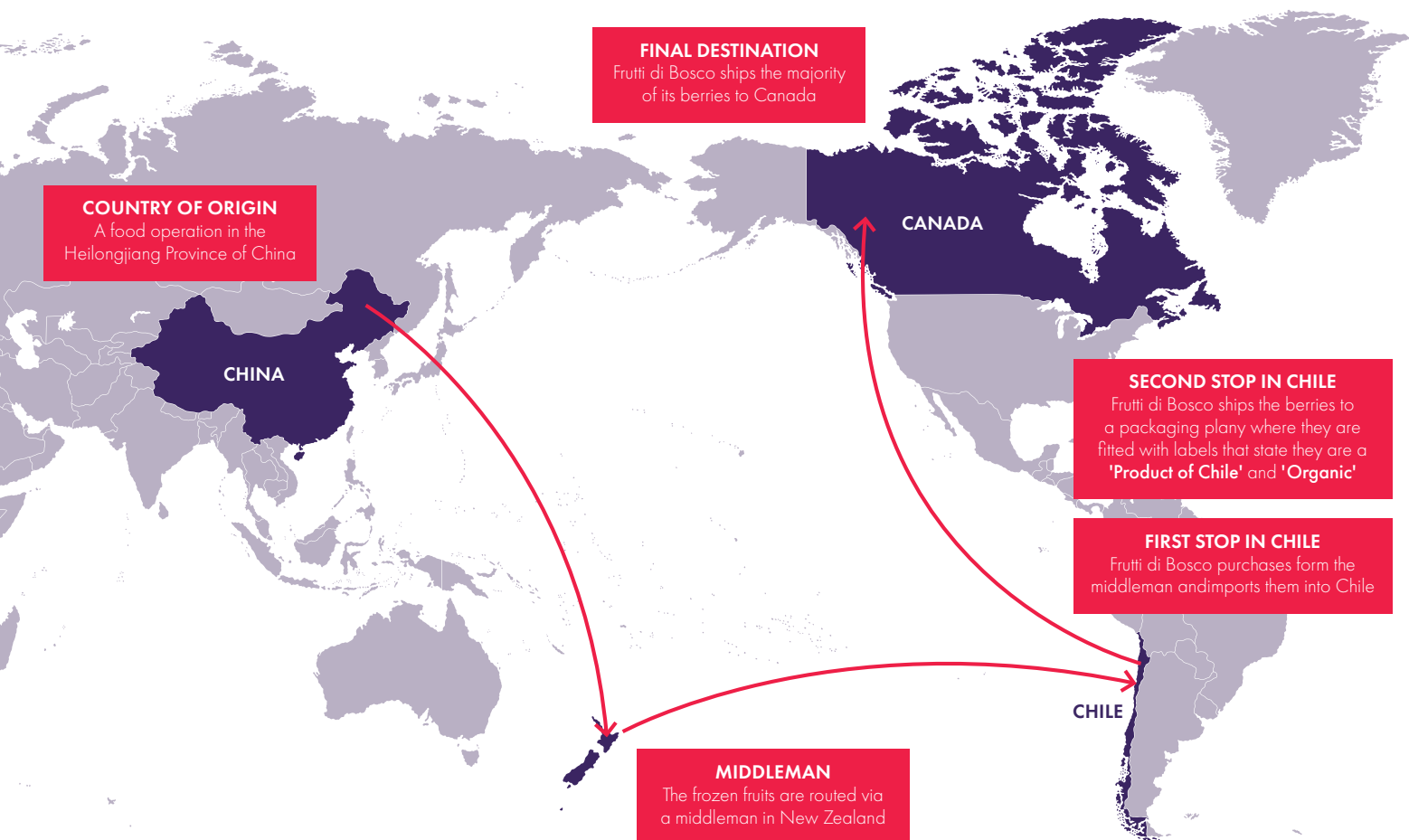


# Three continent raspberry rort exposed by Reuters

Information sourced from the original article by Dave Sherwood, [Reuters.com](https://www.reuters.com)

In January 2017, Chilean Customs inspectors acted on a tip from a whistle-blower: The country's prized crop of raspberries was under threat. Inspectors raided the offices of Frutti di Bosco, a little-known fruit trading company on the second floor of a tower block in downtown Santiago. The files, company data and sales records they seized revealed a food trading racket that spanned three continents.

At its heart was a fraud centred on raspberries. Low-cost frozen berries grown in China were shipped to a packing plant in central Chile. Hundreds of tons of fruit were re-packaged and re-branded by Frutti di Bosco as Premium Chilean-grown Organic fruit, then shipped to consumers in Canadian cities including Vancouver and Montreal, according to documents prepared by Chilean Customs as part of its investigation. The agency calculated that at least \$12 million worth of mislabelled raspberries were sent to Canada between 2014 and 2016.



Much of that product, the documents showed, came from Harbin Gaotai Food Co Ltd, a Chinese supplier. Canadian health authorities later linked berries from Harbin Gaotai to a 2017 norovirus outbreak in Quebec that sickened hundreds of people. Canadian authorities issued a recall on Harbin Gaotai berries coming directly to Canada from China dating back to July 2016.

What they didn't realise is that Harbin Gaotai raspberries had also entered Canada through a backdoor during that period in the form of falsely labelled fruit shipped from Chile by Frutti di Bosco.

The scheme, pieced together for the first time by Reuters, lays bare the ease with which mislabelled, potentially risky products can be slipped past the world's health and customs agencies, even as authorities across the globe scramble to ensure foods entering their countries are free of a new scourge - COVID-19. Pulling off the fraud was relatively simple, the investigation revealed.

**The Canada-Chile trade pact, which came into force in 1997, allows exporters to self-certify the provenance of their goods, trade experts said. The agreement allowed the mislabelled berries to enter Canada tariff-free, evading a 6% levy slapped on the same fruit imported directly from China, Chilean Customs documents show.**

More lucrative still, conventional fruit represented as "organic" could fetch premium prices, piggybacking on Chile's reputation for safety and quality. Documents certifying the fruit as organic were faked, customs inspectors found.

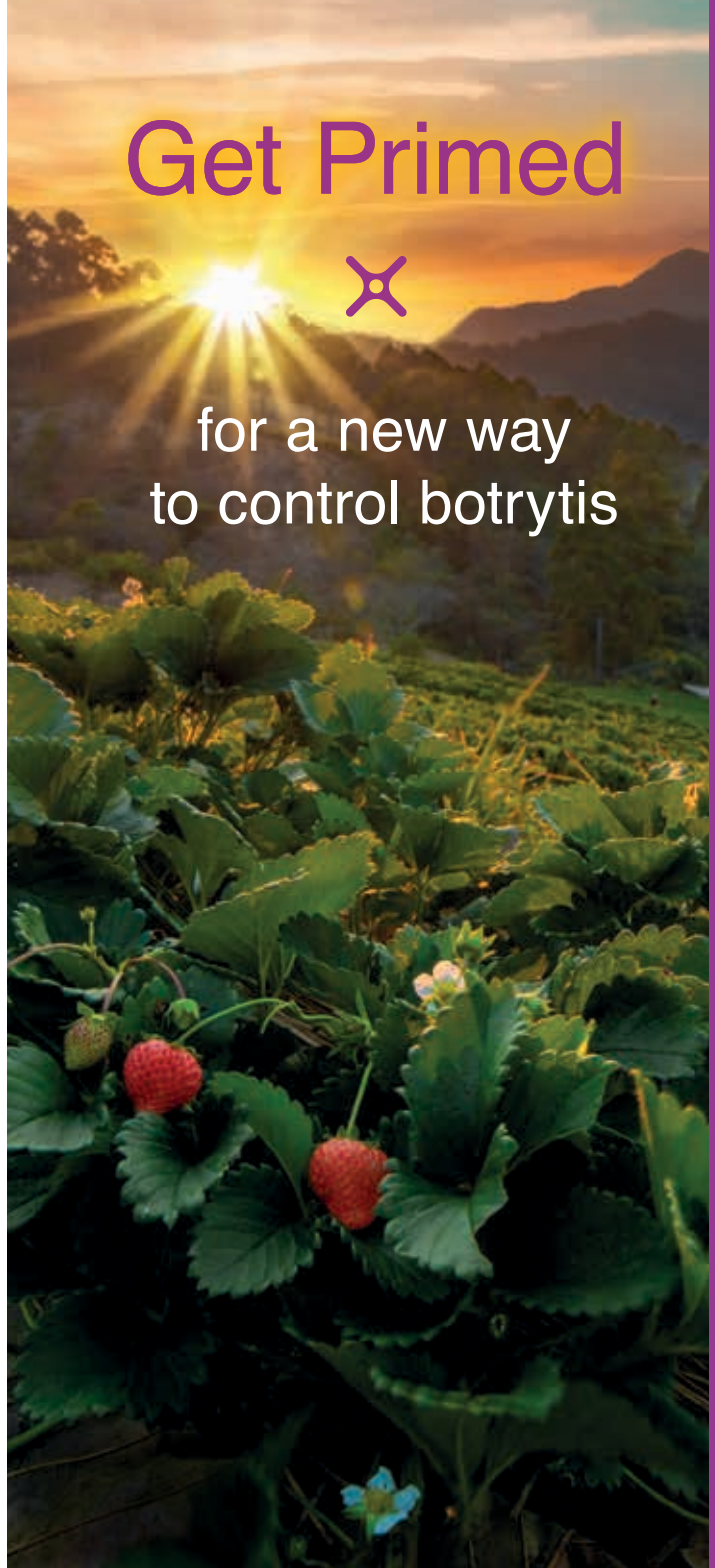
**For the full story of the investigation, visit**  
<https://bit.ly/CCC-Rasp-Scam>



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