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On the 7th of June, 2011, Dutch customs came across a shipment of orchids in transit from Ecuador to Switzerland, which according to the Ecuadorian CITES export permits contained a total of 789 plants of a large variety of species of the family of the ORCHIDACEAE.

Customs officers observed that many plants were sent with plastic bags around the roots, which were closed with a piece of tape. Because of the tape, it was obscured that each bag could contain more than one plant, whereas it looked as though they were part of one and the same plant. After opening several plastic bags of some plants of the same species, a quick count by the customs officers revealed that of several species of orchids more plants had been exported than allowed by the CITES export permits. As a consequence, with permission from our department, Dutch

customs seized the entire shipment on the 8th of June, 2011. We have informed the Ecuadorian CITES MA of the seizure.

A counting of the seized plants by a botanical expert at a holding facility of our Confiscated Goods Department, revealed that the seized shipment contained a total of 1020 plants of the family of the ORCHIDACEAE. Out of the 1020 plants, 913 plants belonged to species of orchids included in Annex B and 107 plants belonged to species of orchids included in Annex A.

Our botanical expert did not find real evidence that the plants were taken from the wild. Therefore, the decision was made to donate the plants to botanical gardens.

As the shipment was in transit, under Dutch law, the airline companies transporting the shipment were held accountable for the illegal transportation. The costs of the seizure will be recovered from the transporters.