

**Department of Justice**  
U.S. Attorney's Office  
Western District of Pennsylvania

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Thursday, March 11, 2021

## **Owner of Erie Fresh Meat Market Pleads Guilty to Food Stamp Fraud**

ERIE, Pa. - A resident of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, pleaded guilty in federal court to a charge of conspiracy to defraud the United States, Acting United States Attorney Stephen R. Kaufman announced today.

Laith Kadhem, 36, pleaded guilty to one count before United States District Judge Stephanie L. Haines.

In connection with the guilty plea, the court was advised that from in and around March 2016 to in and around September 2017, Kadhem, who was the owner and operator of Anwar Fresh Meat Market in Erie and a co-defendant, Haydar Al-Kofi, who was the manager and partner working at Anwar Fresh Meat Market, conspired to defraud the United States by filing an application containing false information for a license to accept SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) benefits and accepting food stamps for cash, and ineligible items.

Judge Haines scheduled sentencing for July 16, 2021 at 11:00 a.m. The law provides for a total sentence of 5 years in prison, a fine of \$250,000, or both. Under the Federal Sentencing Guidelines, the actual sentence imposed is based upon the seriousness of the offense and the prior criminal history, if any, of the defendant.

Pending sentencing, the court continued Kadhem on bond.

Assistant United States Attorney Paul S. Sellers is prosecuting this case on behalf of the government.

This case was investigated as part of the Pittsburgh Document and Benefit Fraud Task Force (DBFTF), a multi-agency partnership established to focus on high-impact criminal investigations involving the use of fraudulent documents in furtherance of immigrations benefit applications and petitions, financial fraud, criminal work-site enforcement, and public benefits fraud. The Pittsburgh DBFTF consists of the following agencies: Homeland Security Investigations, US Citizenship and Immigration Services, the Social Security Administration-Office of the Inspector General, the Internal Revenue Service-Criminal Investigations, US Department of State-Diplomatic Security Service, US Department of Agriculture- Office of the Inspector General, US Department of Labor-Office of the Inspector General, and the Pennsylvania Office of the Attorney General.

**Topic(s):**  
Financial Fraud

**Component(s):**  
[USAO - Pennsylvania, Western](#)