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## Trial to Begin on Illegal Workers

By [SUSAN SAULNY](#)

The former chief executive of an Iowa slaughterhouse that was at the center of one of nation's largest [immigration](#) raids is scheduled to stand trial in federal court beginning Tuesday on a host of charges including money laundering and bank fraud.

The defendant, Sholom Rubashkin, was a top manager and part of the family ownership at [Agriprocessors Inc.](#), a meatpacking plant in Postville, Iowa, that was one of the largest kosher slaughterhouses in the country.

Mr. Rubashkin, 49, is accused of being closely involved in efforts to employ illegal workers at the plant, in addition to the fraud-related charges.

About half of Agriprocessors' work force was arrested at the plant in the May 2008 raid. The immigrants had reported the use of under-age employees and what they said were abusive work conditions to the authorities.

Hundreds of workers, some from Guatemala, were convicted on federal charges after the raid. Most served five months in prison and were deported.

Iowa prosecutors initially faced criticism for punishing the workers but not Agriprocessors' executives and owners. Mr. Rubashkin is the highest-ranking executive to face arrest in stepped-up immigration raids at packinghouses nationwide since late 2006.

The trial had been set to take place in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, not far from the slaughterhouse. But a judge granted a change of venue, to Sioux Falls, S.D., saying that news coverage of the case posed a risk of influencing potential jurors.

"Mr. Rubashkin denies all charges levied against him, and is thankful for the court's ruling giving a change of venue," said Guy R. Cook, a lawyer for Mr. Rubashkin. "This gives him a fair chance at trial."

Mr. Rubashkin actually faces two separate trials. The first, which is expected to last five or six weeks, is set to focus on nearly 100 fraud charges, including making false statements to a bank and failing to pay livestock providers. A second trial on dozens of immigration-related charges is expected to begin one week after the end of the fraud trial. Mr. Rubashkin and his father, Aaron Rubashkin, both Lubavitch Hasidic Jews, built Agriprocessors into a kosher giant.

According to a criminal complaint, in the days before the raid, Mr. Rubashkin participated directly in efforts to obtain fraudulent documents that could pass immigration agents' scrutiny for dozens of illegal immigrants working in Postville.

The complaint suggests that plant managers heard a raid was coming and told many workers they would have to present valid identity documents or be fired.

*Monica Davey contributed reporting.*