

## Philippines foils P78.9 Mn smuggled agri goods

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Philippines's Department of Agriculture (DA) continues its intensified measures against agricultural smuggling as the Office of the Assistant Secretary for DA Inspectorate and Enforcement (DA I&E), along with the Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) and the Bureau of Customs (BOC), successfully seized P78.9 million worth of illegally imported agricultural goods during separate operations at the Manila International Container Port (MICP) in last few days.

Following tip-offs, the team busted three container vans from Taculog J International Consumer Goods Trading with smuggled fresh red and white onions amounting to P25.3 million on December 27, 2022.

The second operation, which was conducted on January 3, 2023, five containers from Taculog J International Consumer Goods Trading and Hutchison Jardine Trading Corporation yielded P27.8 million worth of contrabands—specifically fresh red and white onions, frozen pork stomach pouch cuts, and frozen boneless beef shanks.

Meanwhile, P23.58 million worth of illegally imported red onions were also discovered in three container vans from Asterzenmed, Inc. during the January 4, 2023 operation.

The latest reported operation, which took place on January 5, 2023, thwarted the unauthorized entry of about P2.2 million worth of fresh carrots found in an Asterzenmed, Inc. container into the country.

DA Assistant Secretary for DA Inspectorate and Enforcement James Layug confirmed that intelligence operations for shipments under the three offending consignees are ongoing.

The Department is set to take legal charges against the illegal importers for violating the Food Safety Act of 2013 and the Anti-Agricultural Smuggling Act of 2016.

According to the Anti-Agricultural Smuggling Act, large-scale agricultural smuggling occurs when at least P10 million worth of rice or at least P1 million worth of sugar, corn, pork, poultry, garlic, onion, carrots, fish, and cruciferous vegetables—either raw, processed, or preserved—is illegally brought into the country.