

Philippines decides not to import onions next year

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Philippines Department of Agriculture (DA) will not import onions for the year as the harvest is expected to begin in the upcoming weeks, Domingo F. Panganiban Senior Undersecretary said during a press conference.

Panganiban said the onion supply is not enough but the Department is not considering import, since farmers will begin to harvest in January and February. He added that the DA is mobilizing the Kadiwa program to stabilize the prices of onions.

“We found out that there are smugglers that are keeping their stock in warehouses,” Panganiban said.

James Layug assistant Secretary for Inspectorate and Enforcement reported that the DA has seized about P500 million worth of smuggled agricultural products in the previous months.

Layug explained that they would file cases against five consignees for violating Anti-Agricultural Smuggling Act.

Based on their data, Layug said around 300 metric tons or 300,000 kilograms of onions were seized and confiscated by a composite team composed of the Bureau of Plant Industry (BPI), Philippine Coast Guard (PCG), Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA), Manila International Container Port’s Customs Intelligence and Investigation Service (MICP-CIIS), National Capital Region Police Office (NCRPO), Philippine National Police’s Criminal Investigation and Detection Group (PNP-CIDG), and the Bureau of Customs (BOC).

For rice, Mercedita Sombilla, Undersecretary assured that there will be no supply shortage next year.

“We don’t have a shortage of supply. What happens probably is a lower beginning stock of rice,” Sombilla said.

She added that DA is making every effort to balance importation and increase local production in an effort to stabilise and even reduce the cost of commodities.

The rice program will have an additional P4.1 billion for its fertilizer subsidy program. DA is still carefully determining how much will go to organic and inorganic fertilizers.

The agency is working to finalise the purchase of fertilizers through a government-to-government arrangement by January, which will be distributed through fertilizer vouchers.