

Russian Security Officials Destroy Turkish Oranges in the North Caucasus

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Russian security officials have seized nearly half a ton of oranges from vendors at a city market in the North Caucasus and destroyed the fruit, reasoning that the oranges had been brought from Turkey against Russia's ban on food imports from the country, the Interfax news agency reported Thursday.

The 490 kilograms of oranges seized in the republic of Karachayev-Cherkessia represent “sanctioned” goods, “because [they] fall under the Russian president's decree regarding the introduction of special economic measures against Turkey,” a spokesperson for Russia's Federal Security Service (FSB) was quoted as saying, commenting on the security agency's joint raid with agricultural watchdog Rosselkhoznadzor.

Russian President Vladimir Putin introduced sanctions against Turkey after the NATO member country downed a Russian bomber plane near the border with Syria — accusing it of violating Turkish airspace. Putin called the Nov. 24 downing a “stab in the back by accomplices of terrorists.”

The ban on food imports from Turkey — which supplied a large share of oranges, tomatoes and other produce and poultry sold in Russian stores — was postponed until after New Year's Eve celebrations, to allow Russians to stock up on favorite foods for the holidays.

After the holidays, FSB and agricultural officials began seizing and destroying Turkish produce, according to news reports.

Vendors in Karachayevo-Cherkessia said in a video posted online that government officials showed up at their market on Jan. 1 and moved to seize the oranges, without producing warrants or other paperwork.

An official order to seize the fruit was, finally, presented during the latest raid, one of the vendors said in the video.

Agriculture watchdog officials seized 7.8 tons of Turkish tomatoes in the southern Rostov region, regional Kavkazsky Uzel (Caucasian Knot) news website reported earlier this week. Besides lacking proper paperwork, the tomatoes were found to be contaminated by thrips flies, the agency said.

Since the start of the year, government officials in the Stavropol region have destroyed 225 kilograms of mandarin oranges from Turkey, the RBC news agency reported over the past weekend, citing Rosselkhoznadzor.

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