

Onishchenko Drops Chicken Threat

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A customer selecting a packet of chilled chicken at a British supermarket. **Chris Ratcliffe**

Top sanitary doctor Gennady Onishchenko said Saturday that the government would not ban sales of all frozen chicken starting next year, backtracking on his previous statement earlier this month.

Current restrictions on frozen chicken would only expand next year to ban its use for manufacturing “best quality” foods, he said after talks with European Union trade experts, RIA-Novosti reported.

A market source and an official said Saturday that the new restrictions would ban manufacturers from using frozen chicken in products unless they subject these products to heat treatment afterward, Interfax reported.

Frozen chicken currently cannot be an ingredient in baby food and diet food, Onishchenko said. He warned earlier this month that the authorities would halt sales of frozen chicken next year in a move that could hurt domestic suppliers and imports, including from the United States.

The measure was to spur the sales of chilled chicken, which Onishchenko said was healthier. He said Friday that the authorities wanted such chicken to account for 75 percent of the market next year, up from 60 percent this year.

All chicken meat now imported to Russia is frozen. After Onichshenko's initial statement, Russia's chief negotiator for the accession to the World Trade Organization, Maxim Medvedkov, said the organization's members had indicated that the total ban on frozen chicken sales would not conform to its standards.

Agricultural Industry Union chief Ivan Obolentsev said at the time that a total ban on frozen chicken sales would drastically destabilize the market and that it would not help improve the quality of chicken products.

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