

# Caviar Exports Resume After 9 Years

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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The Federal Fisheries Agency hopes that canceling the ban will reduce wild sturgeon poaching in the Black Sea. **Andrei Makhonin**

Official exports of sturgeon caviar to the European Union have resumed after a nine-year ban, a fishery watchdog said Friday.

Stocks of sturgeon have shrunk since the fall of the Soviet Union, and Russia banned exports of black caviar in 2002. That played into the hands of poachers, taking the illegal market to \$1 billion.

Russia allows the sale of nine tons of black caviar from wild sturgeon on the domestic market each year. But the Federal Fisheries Agency has decided to begin allowing exports of caviar from farmed fish to Europe, said Alexander Savelyev, a spokesman for the agency.

He said export volumes would grow. Fish farms in the Rostov, Kaluga, Astrakhan and Novosibirsk regions will soon be able to produce up to 10 to 15 tons of caviar per year.

"It takes a sturgeon five to seven years to mature, so I expect that in the next five years we will flood both the internal and export markets with caviar," he said.

The move is expected to stop poachers, Savelyev said, but would be unlikely to lead to a drop in prices.

"You shouldn't have any illusions about it, black caviar is never going to be cheap," he said.

Illegal black caviar sells in Moscow markets for about \$1,600 a kilogram and has been advertised for sale on some European Internet sites for about \$5,000.

The Caspian Sea has four-fifths of wild sturgeon reserves.

Russia is in an accord with Iran, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Azerbaijan, setting quotas on sturgeon fishing and banning exports.

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