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Rice Exports Fill Egypt's Niche

By The Moscow Times

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BELOKURIKHA — Russia became an exporter of rice in the early months of 2011, shipping 100,000 tons to markets once served by Egyptian exports, agricultural analyst Dmitry Rylko said Friday.

"Russia is becoming a major rice exporter, even though we have a huge shortfall in the overall harvest," Rylko, director of the Institute for Agricultural Market Studies, told a conference in the Altai region.

In raw rice terms, Rylko said, Russia was a net exporter. Its main destination is Turkey, he said.

The country's ban on grain exports, imposed last year when a catastrophic drought slashed its harvest by a third, will remain in force at least until July 1, but some types of agricultural exports are excluded from the embargo.

Data from the SovEcon think tank showed that rice was the only grain produced last year

in greater quantity than the year before.

A variety of short grain rice are grown in the south, near the Black Sea coast.

The harvest last year declined by over a third from 2009, SovEcon said. But rice production increased by more than 16 percent.

"Egypt has contracted as a short-grain rice exporter, and the Krasnodar region has taken over," Rylko said.

Egypt has imposed a nominal ban on rice exports to control basic commodities prices, which is in force until October 2011, although traders are allowed to export 100,000 tons per month under license.

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