

Belarus Freezes Food Prices

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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MINSK — Belarus on Tuesday froze prices on a number of foodstuffs as analysts warned that the former Soviet republic could descend into economic chaos and an IMF mission headed to Minsk to assess the situation.

A government decree said prices for fish, tea, coffee, certain types of sausages, cheese and a number of fruits and vegetables — some of which have doubled in the last two months — cannot be raised further until July 1.

Belarus devalued its ruble by 36 percent to 4,977 per dollar last week in an attempt to reduce a current account deficit largely caused by generous public spending in the run-up to Alexander Lukashenko's re-election as president last December. But the unofficial black market rate for rubles is still about 6,000 per dollar.

Russia and several other ex-Soviet nations are to decide on that bailout package on June 4.

The International Monetary Fund said Tuesday that a mission would visit Belarus on June 1-13

for regular post-program monitoring. Minsk has not applied for IMF funding so far.

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