

Race On to End Spat Over Vegetable Ban

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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EU and Russian officials expressed hope Monday that a dispute over Russia's decision to ban European vegetables amid an E. coli outbreak in Germany would be resolved before a EU-Russia summit at the end of the week.

Asked at a Brussels news conference whether the ban was on the agenda for the two-day summit, which opens Thursday in Nizhny Novgorod, European Commission spokeswoman Pia Hansen replied: "We hope not. We hope to find a solution to this problem and to convince our Russian partners that such measures are not needed and will not affect the topic at the summit. We hope to find a solution before the summit," Interfax reported.

Separately, Russia's EU envoy, Vladimir Chirov, said via video link from Brussels that he hoped "the issue will be clarified" before the summit, Interfax reported.

Russia banned all EU vegetables on Thursday over fears about a new strain of the E. coli bacterial infection that by Monday had killed at least 22 people and sickened more than 2,200 others, mostly in northern Germany.

German scientists on Monday failed to confirm that the source of the outbreak was bean sprouts grown at a vegetable farm in northern Germany. Initial suspicion had fallen on cucumbers, tomatoes or lettuce, possibly from Spain.

The EU has lambasted the Russian ban as unfair. Prime Minister Vladimir Putin acknowledged on Friday that the ban might violate the rules of the World Trade Organization, which Russia hopes to join this year. But he defended the ban, saying, "Cucumbers that people die from after eating really stink."

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