

Customs Union to Adopt WTO Food Safety Standards

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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Poultry producers like Yevrodon, owner of this turkey plant, may see market changes as WTO standards prevail. **Denis Grishkin**

The three-nation customs union led by Russia will adopt food safety rules on Tuesday that comply with the rules of the World Trade Organization, Prime Minister Vladimir Putin said Monday.

Putin's comments, to an advisory panel of chief executives of multinational companies that invest in Russia, suggested that talks on wrapping up Russia's 18-year bid to join the WTO are moving toward a conclusion.

"We will meet with our colleagues in St. Petersburg and, I hope, adopt new rules on phytosanitary and sanitary controls to cover the customs union," Putin said, referring to the trade bloc created by Russia, Kazakhstan and Belarus.

"Our experts have worked long on this and have come up with rules that are, in practice, compliant with the WTO's norms. We have agreed this with our colleagues in the process of joining the World Trade Organization."

Putin was responding to a question from Nestle chief executive Paul Bulcke, who praised the customs union as a driver of economic growth but called for paperwork to be simplified.

Health and safety standards have long been a thorny issue in trade relations between Russia and, in particular, U.S. poultry exporters whose produce has been banned by Russia's consumer-protection watchdog.

Negotiators say Russia could complete its entry talks in time for a WTO ministerial meeting in December.

Swiss-mediated talks between Russia and Georgia are planned this week in an attempt to find a resolution to a border control dispute. Georgia has linked its assent to Russia's WTO entry to resolving the border dispute.

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