

Pork Import Rise Possible With WTO

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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Pork imports into Russia may triple as the country's membership in the World Trade Organization discourages investment in the industry, the National Pig Breeders' Union said.

Inbound shipments of the meat last year were about 620,000 tons, or 20 percent of local consumption, a presentation by the union at an agricultural conference in Moscow on Tuesday showed. Imports will increase to about 1.8 million tons in 2020, meeting as much as 45 percent of local demand, the group said.

"The industry's investment attractiveness will drop sharply after Russia's accession to the WTO," Nikolai Birulin, the union's chief expert, said at the conference. "Only those farm projects that are being constructed now have a chance to be commissioned."

Domestic pork production will decrease starting in 2014 because the industry's low profitability will deter investment and output at small private farms and households will be uncompetitive, Birulin said. Russia's pig-breeding industry may face losses of at least 20 billion rubles (\$662 million) under the terms of the country's WTO membership, he said.

The conference was organized by the Moscow-based Institute for Agricultural Market Studies. The WTO in December accepted Russia as a member, ushering in the last major economy after more than 18 years of negotiations.

Russia is considering a protective grain export duty to put a brake on record exports, Deputy Agriculture Minister Ilya Shestakov said Tuesday, Reuters reported.

"We are actively discussing it. It is an important aspect of our activity. No one is denying the likelihood," Shestakov said on the sidelines of the Institute for Agricultural Market Studies conference.

Traders and analysts said last week that they expected the government, which has said Russia should export no more than 23 million to 25 million tons of grain during this crop year, would consider imposing export duties from April, when exports are likely to hit that level. The government would base its decision on February exports, Shestakov said.

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