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Klepach Hints at 2013 Grain Restrictions

By The Moscow Times

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Russia will not impose any grain export restrictions at all this year but some limits may be possible in 2013 if wheat exports continue on a large scale, Deputy Economic Development Minister Andrei Klepach said Thursday.

"We do not plan any restrictions before the end of this year; this is an official position," Klepach told Reuters. "There is no plan to impose a ban or floating tariffs."

Conflicting statements by Russian officials have added to confusion. Klepach is deputy to Economic Development Minister Andrei Belousov, who said over the weekend that an export ban was possible.

But the Deputy Prime Minister in charge of agriculture, Arkady Dvorkovich, said the Economic Development Ministry had no responsibility for agricultural policy and denied that any restrictions were under discussion at any level.

"You can trust or not trust, you can ask any questions, but we will not impose any export

restrictions," Dvorkovich told Reuters on Tuesday.

Russia is expected to harvest about 70 million tons of grain, down from last year's 94 million tons. The 2012/13 exportable surplus is seen at 10-12 million tons of grains, of which about 7 million tons have already been shipped.

"The problem is that the balance (of supply and demand) is quite tight, and exports could cause a significant domestic price increase after the new year," Klepach said, saying prices at 8,500-9,000 rubles ($270-290) per ton were already near "critical" levels.

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