

Parliament Mulls WTO Defenses

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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A statement from the parliament's upper house Monday bolstered concerns about the country's now yearlong membership in the WTO, pointing to increasing imports of dairy products as a downside of the accession.

The Federation Council, as the upper house is called, will focus on sponsoring bills that could backstop the farming industry, said Sergei Shatirov, deputy chairman of the legislature's economic policy committee.

These bills will seek to increase state subsidies to the sector in a bid to bring it on par with foreign competition, he said.

"The issue will become a priority during the fall session," he said, Interfax reported.

Countries like Finland, Latvia, Estonia, Lithuania and Belarus have taken advantage of lower import duties — a result of joining the WTO — to increase dairy exports to Russia, Shatirov said.

Russian producers lost 30 billion rubles (\$900 million) last year, largely because of the WTO accession, according to the National Union of Dairy Producers.

Also, greater pork imports have caused wholesale pork prices to fall by 26 percent over the last year, meaning lost revenue for domestic pork suppliers, according to the Public Chamber, a Kremlin-established watchdog.

That said, Shatirov stated that Russia would gain from WTO membership in the longer term.

"We have no alternative but to stay in this organization," he said.

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