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Watchdog to Tighten Checks on Dutch Dairy Imports, Could Ban Tulip Supplies

By The Moscow Times

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An art installation featuring Dutch cheese at the All-Russia Exhibition Center as part of the “Dutch Village” exhibit, which runs until Oct. 13. Russian authorities said Wednesday that they were tightening checks on dairy imports from the Netherlands and could ban Dutch tulip supplies. **Vladimir Filonov**

Russian authorities said Wednesday that they were tightening checks on dairy imports from the Netherlands and could also ban Dutch tulip supplies amid increasingly strained relations between the two nations.

Sergei Dankvert, chief of the food safety watchdog Rosselkhoznadzor, said preliminary inspections have revealed shortcomings in checks on dairy goods by the Dutch authorities.

"The veterinary services of that country [the Netherlands] are signing off on documents without looking at the products," Dankvert said.

Meanwhile, Alexei Alekseyenko, the watchdog's spokesman, said Wednesday that Russia

could also ban tulip imports from the Netherlands because it was unhappy with their quality, RBC reported.

Ties between Russia and the Netherlands have been severely tested by the arrest this weekend in The Hague of a Russian diplomat that has drawn angry demands for apologies from Moscow. Russia's Foreign Ministry said the incident marked a crude violation of diplomatic immunity.

Last week, the Dutch government said it had initiated legal proceedings against Russia at the United Nations over what it said was the illegal seizure by the Russian authorities of a Dutch-registered icebreaker belonging to environmental campaign group Greenpeace. The detention of Greenpeace activists on charges of piracy has drawn much international criticism.

Dutch dairy producers are not alone in feeling the wrath of Moscow recently.

Russia's consumer safety watchdog said Monday it was ordering a ban on Lithuanian dairy products over doubts about their safety. Lithuania's President Dalia Grybauskaite told the UN last month that Russian action against Vilnius' exports were an attempt to put political pressure on the country.

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