

Deluge of Georgian Mandarins Set to Hit Russian Market

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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Mandarins and other fruit on sale at a Moscow supermarket. **Maxim Stulov**

In Georgia, the citrus fruit harvesting season is peaking, and after a 6-year import ban was dispensed with this summer, Russia is set to receive a flood of oranges and mandarins from its southern neighbor.

All forms of transport will be plugged in to the impending export flow. So far, Georgian farmers have sent 11 trailer loads of this year's harvest to Russia by road, carrying 2,000 tons of produce, mostly mandarins, Interfax reported. On Wednesday, a cargo ship will dock in the Black Sea port of Batumi, before sailing with a sizable load for Russia's Novorossiisk, said Zaur Putkaradze, Agriculture Minister in the southwestern Adjara autonomous republic.

Russia laid an import ban on Georgian mineral water, wine and food products in 2006, justifying the measure by pointing to sanitary concerns. The restrictions have been gradually lifted this year, soon after a change in the ex-Soviet nation's political leadership and the

departure of Mikhail Saakashvili, for whom Russian leaders had a fierce antipathy.

In preparation for the export drive, Adjara has set up a single-window system through which the farmers are able to receive all support and documentation to export produce to Russia and other CIS countries.

The region's citrus crop account for about 80 percent of Georgian market. This year's citrus harvest in Adjara is expected to reach 110,000 tons, 40,000 to 50,000 of which is likely to be exported to Russia. A delegation from the Russian food standards watchdog, Rosselkhoz nadzor, has been in the region since Nov. 18 to monitor shipments.

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