

Partial Ban on Norwegian Fish Imports Starts Jan. 1

By [The Moscow Times](#)

December 19, 2013



A salmon farmer eying his catch. Salmon has so far avoided the import ban, though herring has been less lucky.

Russia has banned the importation of certain Norwegian fish, excluding salmon, as of Jan. 1 of 2014, the Russian consumer protection watchdog announced Thursday.

Exempt from the ban are 29 companies that have already passed inspections by Russia's Federal Veterinary and Phytosanitary Inspection Service, the agency's head Sergei Dankvert told Interfax.

The ban follows a series of spats between the Russian watchdog and its Norwegian counterpart, Mattilsynet, that culminated in Mattilsynet's refusal to allow Russian inspectors onto several Norwegian salmon farms last week.

Mattilsynet told Russia that its duty is to ensure that Norwegian companies meet their own

country's sanitary requirements, not those of Russia and its Customs Union, Dankvert said.

In view of Mattilsynet's failure to exercise quality control and Norwegian products' frequent violations of Russian sanitary standards, Russia "had nothing left to do but limit fish imports from Norway," Dankvert said.

Salmon, which constitutes 45 percent of Norway's total fish exports to Russia, may soon be banned but has not been yet, thanks to mutual efforts by Russian and Norwegian businesses to eliminate products that fail to meet Russian standards, veterinary service spokesman Alexei Alekseyenko said.

The most significant impact of the ban may be an abrupt hike in herring prices following a market deficit that would set in once Russian manufacturers' reserves run out in several months' time, Fishing Union head Sergei Gudkov told Itar-Tass on Wednesday.

Russia first threatened to impose an embargo on Norwegian salmon and other breeds of fish in late October.

The veterinary service insisted at the time that Russian producers could meet the market's needs and prevent a deficit, despite the fact that Norwegian salmon imports amount to about 0.5 billion euros (\$684 million) a year.

The agency also assured consumers that wild Russian salmon was of higher quality than its farmed Norwegian equivalent.

Russia was Norway's largest market for fish in 2012, consuming 820 million euros (\$1.1 billion) of the country's 7-billion-euro fish and seafood export business, according to Norwegian fishing authorities.

Salmon is by far the leading product, with 133,000 tons of mostly smoked salmon exported to Russia in 2012, followed distantly by trout, of which 32,000 tons were exported.

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