

Government Promotes Special Support of Crimean Wine

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Russian officials have asked the country's retailers to support Crimean wine producers.

Russian government officials are asking retailers to give special support to Crimean wine producers in an attempt to help that sector of the peninsula's economy.

Crimean vintners are concerned about their business prospects in the wake of Russia's annexation of the territory and the likely loss of the Ukraine market.

On Wednesday representatives of the biggest retail groups working in Russia and major Crimean wine producers had a meeting with Moscow region Governor Andrei Vorobyov, also attended by officials from Moscow and St. Petersburg. The retailers were asked to help the Crimean wine industry by providing special shelves for their wines and organizing wine-tasting sessions in stores.

"We are not asking for special treatment, but we would like the retailers to pay attention

to the complicated situation we are in," said Mikhail Shtyrlin, general director of Crimean wine company Legenda Kryma, who attended the meeting with Vorobyov.

"We may soon lose the Ukrainian market as any financial operations between Russia and Ukraine could be suspended. Besides, there are still no clear customs regulations [for both countries] for our products, which will throw the industry in turmoil for up to three months. Solving these problems is our number one priority," Shtyrlin said. He added that the Russian market is quite important for Crimea. Last year Russia consumed 25 million bottles of the peninsula's wine.

Shtyrlin also said that Crimean vintners are trying to solve their problems together and are planning to create a Union of Crimean wine producers. This may help the industry in the long term, he added.

The X5 retail group, owner of chain stores Pyatyorochka and Perekryostok, said Thursday that the company has not decided yet whether to give special treatment to Crimean wine products. Retail chain Dixy said the firm is open to negotiations with Crimean wine makers and added that the government officials' requests seem doable. Metro Cash and Carry also said it is ready to discuss giving special attention for Crimean wine.

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