The Moscow Times
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Poultry Imports Decreasing

By The Moscow Times

February 27, 2011



CHICAGO — U.S. poultry exports to Russia, once its largest foreign market, will continue to slide as Russian producers boost output, said Thierry Murad, a regional product manager for AJC International, a food distribution company.

The United States may export as much as 250,000 tons this year to Russia, where the government cut its import quota to 350,000 tons from 780,000, according to Murad, whose company ships poultry products for Tyson Foods and Pilgrim's Pride.

U.S. exports to Russia have declined annually since 2007, when shipments totaled 870,558 tons, USDA data show.

Russia is seeking to become self-sufficient in poultry production, Murad said at the U.S. Department of Agriculture's annual outlook conference in Arlington, Virginia. "Russia will continue to be a net importer, to some extent, of U.S. poultry, but that number is definitely going to go down."

Russia consumed 9.8 percent of U.S. chicken exports last year, down from 20 percent in 2009, Murad said. Shipments sank after Russia banned the use of chlorine as a disinfectant for the meat, disrupting deliveries for about 10 months.

Total U.S. poultry exports probably "will continue to grow" because new foreign customers will more than replace the lost sales to Russia, he said. Demand also is getting a boost from a rising population and an expansion of the global middle class, which will demand more meat in diets, he said.

Original url: https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2011/02/27/poultry-imports-decreasing-a5258