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Russia Could Widen Ban on Ukraine Food Imports

By The Moscow Times

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Since February, Russia has instituted bans on a number of dairy companies, with the most recent targeting the Lozovsky Dairy Factory on July 9.

The list of Ukrainian products banned in Russia will "most likely" be expanded after hygiene violations were detected in a wide range of goods, a top consumer protection official said Wednesday, RIA Novosti reported.

The Federal Consumer Protection Service has conducted trials on products in laboratories across Russia, uncovering problems with juices, beer, preserved vegetables, fish and dairy products from Ukraine, among other things, said the watchdog's head, Anna Popova.

Relations between Russia and Ukraine have been in disarray since the removal of pro-Russia President Viktor Yanukovych in February following months of street protests set off by the ex-leader's decision to pull out of a trade deal with the EU in favor of closer ties with Russia in November.

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Russia has taken similar action against Moldova, whose ratification of an association agreement with the EU earlier this month elicited threats of "protective action" to insulate the Russian economy.

Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev on Wednesday reiterated Russia's stance, saying that Ukraine and Moldova's decisions to sign association agreements with the EU could have negative consequences for the Russia market, and that the country needs to protect itself.

Russian officials have said that free-trade zones with the EU, which are to be formed under the agreements, will allow the former Soviet republics to channel more of their own goods to Russia or even to flood the Russian market with cheap re-exported goods from the EU, thereby posing a threat to domestic producers.

"We consider the risks to be quite serious, especially in regard to technical regulations, standards, sanitary and phytosanitary measures," Medvedev said, the Prime news agency reported.

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