

Russian Companies Increase Food Orders From Turkey to Offset Import Ban

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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ISTANBUL – Turkish companies are enjoying a rise in orders from Russia as their government eyes a lucrative long-term opportunity from Moscow's ban on imported Western foods.

Mehmet Buyukeksi, head of the Turkish Exporters Assembly, or TIM, said he expected a significant increase in poultry and seafood exports to Russia, and that Turkey could also meet increased Russian demand for fruit and vegetables.

"Demand from Russia for Turkish products increased after limits to trade with the U.S. and EU were introduced," Buyukeksi said in written answers to questions from Reuters. Turkey was the 5th leading supplier of food to Russia with \$1.68 billion worth of trade in 2013.

Economy Minister Nihat Zeybekci said Moscow's ban – a response to Western sanctions over the Ukraine crisis – provided an opportunity for Turkey to bolster its exports not only of food, but also of consumer goods.

"I see Russia as an opportunity for Turkey, I don't think the problems between Russia and the West are long-term and sustainable," Zeybekci told Reuters in an interview Monday.

"We should make this opportunity a strong, long-term, permanent and corporate one...We are in talks to meet their needs and make the most of this opportunity," he said.

Turkey and Latin American nations like Brazil look likely to emerge as key winners from Russia's decision to ban most EU and U.S. food imports.

Russian Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev announced the one-year ban on Thursday on meat, fish, dairy, fruit and vegetables from the United States, the EU's 28 member states, Norway - a major exporter of salmon - Canada and Australia.

Poultry Suppliers

Zeybekci said Turkey had been in talks with Russia on deepening trade long before the ban, including on Turkey's possible involvement in a Customs Union between Russia and Central Asian states including Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan.

Buyukeksi said his organization was working closely with the Economy and Agriculture Ministries to simplify procedures for exporting to Russia.

"We expect a Russian delegation to visit Turkey next week within this framework," he said.

Russia has become the world's biggest consumer of EU fruit and vegetables by far, the second biggest buyer of U.S. poultry and a major global consumer of fish, meat and dairy products, so the ban opens up big opportunities for others.

Analysts said last week that Turkish poultry companies such as Banvit and Pinar Et would benefit from the start of processed white meat imports to Russia from Turkey.

Long-time rival Greece accuses Turkey, an EU candidate nation and member of the NATO military alliance, of seeking to exploit the situation and of behavior that does not befit a country seeking membership in the European Union.

"The Foreign Ministry has been clear that it is not possible for partners in NATO and the European Union or candidate countries for the EU, Turkey among them, to be exploiting this trade war and to not follow the policy of the EU," Greek Deputy Foreign Minister Dimitris Kourkoulas told Greek Skai TV.

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