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Reindeer Meat to Replace Banned U.S. Chicken in Russia's Far East

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Specialists are working to farm wild reindeer whose meat will be directed toward the needs of the region's population.

Authorities in the far-eastern Russian region of Chukotka said Monday that they were planning to harvest local reindeer to replace deliveries of U.S. meat to the region.

"Specialists are working [to farm] wild reindeer whose meat will be directed toward the needs of the region's population. In particular [the meat will be sent] to educational institutions, hospitals, procurement enterprises and stores," Governor Roman Kopin said in a statement.

The idea is one of several measures put forward by the local government, which is working to bring its economy in line with a nationwide ban on Western food imports.

The ban — on dairy products, fish, meat, fruit and vegetables from the EU, the U.S., Norway, Australia and Canada — was introduced by the Kremlin in early August after the West brought sanctions against Russia for its annexation of Crimea and apparent support of separatists in eastern Ukraine.

In light of the ban, Chukotka's main food supplier — state-owned enterprise Chukotopttorg — has opened talks with producers in Russia and unaffected countries to maintain the supply of products to the region, Andrei Mingazov, the head of Chukotka's financial and economic department, said in the statement.

Before the ban was announced, Chukotopttorg imported potatoes, apples and chicken legs from the U.S., Mingazov said.

Authorities in Chukotka have also established an agency to monitor changes in the food market in response to fears that the sweeping ban could lead to a hike in the price of domestic products.

"[Our] main goal ... is to maintain a commodity-market equilibrium [while avoiding] unjustified price increases for food products in Chukotka. Today, this is especially important. In line with the introduction of retaliatory economic sanctions against Western countries, we have stopped the traditional delivery of vegetables, fruit and meat produced in the U.S. This situation may affect the pricing for a number of food products," Kopin said.

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