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Minister Urges Asia to Ramp Up Food Exports to Russia

By The Moscow Times

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A vendor sells fruits at the city market in St. Petersburg, Russia.

Economic Development Minister Alexei Ulyukayev on Thursday called on Asian countries to increase their food exports to Russia as the government looks for alternatives to the Western deliveries it has banned.

"I would like to draw the attention of ASEAN countries to the growing opportunities for delivering agricultural produce to Russia," he said in Myanmar, referring to the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, an economic bloc made up of ten countries.

"In particular, we are talking about fresh fruit and vegetables ... and we welcome your exports to Russia, including nuts, beef, pork and chicken," Ulyukayev said, according to a statement posted on the Economic Development Ministry's website.

A ban on selected foods from the U.S., EU, Australia, Canada and Norway was implemented

by the Kremlin earlier this month in response to Western sanctions over Ukraine. The move sparked fears of food shortages, rising prices and inflation in Russia.

The cost of goods impacted by the ban has increased in Russia in recent weeks.

The price of frozen chicken has jumped 4.1 percent and the price of pork 1.6 percent since Aug. 4, according to the State Statistics Service.

Deputy Prime Minister Arkady Dvorkovich told a government meeting Wednesday that foreign importers not affected by the food ban were taking advantage of the situation to drive up prices and maximize their profits, according to a report by Channel One. "Prices have risen quite sharply," he said.

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