

Serbia Seeks Limited Free-Trade Regime With Russia

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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Serbia has asked Russia for a free-trade regime for certain classes of goods, news agency TASS reported Tuesday, citing Russian Energy Minister Alexander Novak.

Serbia would like the proposed free-trade regime to cover sugar, cigarettes, alcohol, meat, poultry and cars, Serbian Foreign Minister Ivica Dacic said. The agreement would cover bilateral trade in these goods, and would therefore require changes to duties paid by both Russia and Serbia.

Russia's Novak noted that, as Russia is a member of the Customs Union alongside Belarus and Kazakhstan, the proposed trade regime would have to be discussed by all three members of the Russia-led trade union before a decision was made.

Russia's Agriculture Ministry earlier stated that, due to the increasing pressure of EU sanctions on Russia's economy, Serbia had a unique chance to expand into the Russian

market. The ministry noted its interest in increasing imports of Serbian meat, milk, fruit and vegetables. Trade turnover between Russia and Serbia in agricultural goods could even double, from \$270 million to \$500 million per year, Russian Agriculture Minister Nikolai Fedorov said.

Serbia and Russia have traditionally been allies, with cultural and historical linkages reaching back centuries. Despite being a candidate for membership in the EU, Serbia has toed a fine line over Russia's annexation of the Ukrainian peninsula of Crimea, notably abstaining from an UN vote in favor of Ukraine's territorial integrity.

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