

Russia Lifts Ban on Chinese Pork as Food Prices Rise

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Russia has begun importing Chinese pork following a decade-long health ban, as Moscow hunts for ways to replace U.S. and EU food embargoed in retaliation for Western sanctions over Ukraine.

The first shipment of 32 containers with 800 tons of pork from China has been delivered to Russia, food safety watchdog Rosselkhoznadzor said in a statement Monday, Russian media has reported.

The shipment was the first since 2004, when Moscow banned imports from China "for veterinary reasons," TASS reported.

When Russia began to contemplate lifting its ban on Chinese pork imports this spring, Rosselkhoznadzor spokesman Alexei Alexeyenko said quality remained a concern.

China has been hit by a variety of animal diseases, including a case earlier this year when

more than 100 decaying bodies of pigs were found floating in a river. Despite the storm of controversy that the case generated, no official explanation was ever provided.

While China is the world's biggest pork producer, most of the meat is intended for domestic consumption. News website China Economic Net has reported that the country had not exported pork to Russia in the past, although China does currently sell to other former Soviet republics such as Belarus, Armenia and Moldova.

Interfax cited a deputy chief of China's food trade chamber as saying meat intended for Russia would come from farms approved for their safety standards, and all stages of production would be closely monitored.

Moscow and Beijing agreed to begin pork supplies to Russian in August, TASS reported. Russia's ban on food imports from countries that had sanctioned it over its role in Ukraine came into effect on Aug. 7.

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