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EU Takes Russia to WTO in Refrigerator Fight

By The Moscow Times

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The EU has accused Russia of levying tariffs that were higher than permitted on several types of goods, including refrigerators and combined refrigerators-freezers.

GENEVA — The EU has launched a trade dispute at the World Trade Organization to challenge Russia's treatment of European exports of paper products, refrigerators and palm oil, the EU and the WTO said.

The EU accuses Russia of levying higher than permitted tariffs on several types of goods, including paper and paperboard, palm oil and its fractions, refrigerators and combined refrigerator-freezers, the WTO said Friday.

Under WTO rules, Russia will have 60 days to settle the issue in direct talks with the EU. After that the EU could escalate the dispute by asking the WTO to adjudicate.

This is the latest in a series of EU complaints lodged since Russia joined the WTO in 2012. They

include a recycling fee on foreign cars, duties on light commercial vehicles and pork.

The European Commission said in a statement that the higher duties had a clearly negative impact on European exports of the products that were worth some 600 million euros ($755 million) per year.

"The EU has raised this issue with Russia both in bilateral talks and in WTO committees, but to no avail," the EU Commission said.

European Commission spokesman Wojtek Talko said the case was not related to Moscow's decision in August to ban most Western food imports in response to U.S. and EU sanctions against Russia over its role in the Ukraine crisis.

Russia is the European Union's third most important trading partner, with 120 billion euros ($150 billion) of exports per year, mainly machinery, transport equipment, chemicals, medicines and agricultural products.

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