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# Russia Could Soften Food Import Ban for Some EU Countries

By The Moscow Times

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A vendor sells bread made of locally grown grain at a shop of the "Russia" collective farm in the settlement of Grigoropolisskaya, northwest of the southern city of Stavropol, Feb. 17.

Russian Agriculture Minister Nikolai Fyodorov said his ministry was considering softening its ban on food imports from a series of European Union countries, the Interfax news agency reported on Wednesday.

The embargo, introduced last year in response to Western sanctions imposed on Moscow for its role in the Ukraine crisis, restricted many European food producers' access to the large Russian market.

Combined with a weaker ruble, it also helped push Russian inflation in February to a near 13-year high of 16.7 percent.

Fyodorov said Russia was considering easing the embargo first of all for Greece, Hungary and

Cyprus.

"We are actively investigating to see what civilized opportunities there are to their proposals [countries that have asked to lift the embargo]," he told journalists. "If we help them, we would not want to create problems for them in their relations with Brussels."

Fyodorov also said his ministry did not plan to change its wheat export duty and that it expected 2015 grain exports at up to 25 million tons.

The government has said the export duty, imposed as of Feb. 1, amounted to 15 percent of the customs price plus 7.5 euros and would be no less than 35 euros ($43) per ton until June 30.

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