

Up to 50% of Dairy Products in Russian Market Are Fake, Report Says

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A one-year ban on select Western products and a rapid slide in the value of the ruble has led to sharp growth in the number of counterfeit dairy products sold in Russia, newspaper Nezavisimaya Gazeta reported Wednesday, citing Russia's agricultural watchdog Rosselkhoznadzor.

Fake dairy products currently account for up to 50 percent of what's on shop shelves, according to the newspaper.

Analysts cited by Nezavisimaya Gazeta also said that the rise in fake dairy products was also leading growth in palm oil imports.

In the first two months of this year palm oil imports increased by 36.9 percent compared

to the same period last year, according to the Rosstat state statistics service.

Palm oil, an edible vegetable oil extracted from the pulp of the fruits of oil palms, is widely used in the production of pastries, biscuits, cooking oils and dairy products because of its low cost.

Russian cheese production has significantly increased since last year, following a ban on dairy products from the European Union and United States tied to their sanctions on Moscow over the Ukraine crisis.

In January the Russian cheese market grew 34 percent, according to state statistics agency Rosstat. However, the production of milk and the volume of imported milk has decreased by 3 and 34 percent respectively, Rosstat said.

These statistics indicate the possibility that palm oil is being used in the production of Russian cheeses.

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