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30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Russian Cheese Production Surges 30% After Ban on Western Imports

By The Moscow Times

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Russian cheese production rose a startling 30 percent in the first four months of the year as domestic producers leapt to fill the gap left by Russia's ban on cheese imports from the West, data released Wednesday showed.

Cheese production between January and April jumped to 180,000 tons, a 29.5 percent rise from the same period in 2014, according to data from state statistics service Rosstat.

The surge in domestic production follows Moscow's ban in August on imports of dairy, fruit, vegetable and meat products from the U.S., EU and other countries that have sanctioned Russia over its role in the Ukraine crisis.

Production of other banned food items lagged behind cheese but still saw steep increases.

Meat production in the first four months of the year was up 13.5 percent to 680,000 tons, chicken rose 12.7 percent to 1.4 million tons and fish gained 6 percent to hit 1.4 million tons.

The cheese boom comes even as Russia battles a shortage of domestic milk arising from the poor condition of the milk industry, which newly appointed Agriculture Minister Alexander Tkachyov has described as "neglected," news agency Gazeta.ru reported.

Milk production in the first four months of the year was down 0.5 percent compared to the same period in 2014, with 1.8 million tons produced, Rosstat said.

Combined with a steep devaluation of the ruble currency late last year, Moscow's ban on Western food imports spurred year-on-year food price inflation to 23.7 percent in the first quarter of the year, according to Rosstat.

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