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Russia Starts Destroying Confiscated Food Before New Law Comes Into Force

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The measures apply to the foreign food items that Russia banned in August last year in response to Western sanctions over its involvement in the Ukraine crisis.

The first batch of sanctioned pork was destroyed in the southern Russian city of Samara three days before the presidential decree ordering the destruction of confiscated Western food comes into force Thursday, news agency RIA Novosti reported.

On Monday, 114 tons of pork that had been seized in April were destroyed, Yulia Melano, spokeswoman for Russia's agriculture watchdog Rosselkhoznadzor, told RIA Novosti, without specifying how the meat had been disposed of.

According to customs documents, the pork was of Brazilian origin. But Brazilian officials didn't confirm the authenticity of the documentation, so Rosselkhoznadzor concluded that the product had been manufactured in the EU, Melano told RIA Novosti.

On Wednesday, the head of the Siberian department of the Federal Customs Service, Yury Ladygin, told the Interfax news agency that confiscated Western food would be ground down by tractors and buried in the ground in the Far East.

President Vladimir Putin signed the decree on the destruction of confiscated Western food on July 29. Smuggled Western food products are to be destroyed from Aug. 6.

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The ban was prolonged in June for another year as the U.S. and EU extended their sanctions against Russia.

The decision to destroy confiscated Western food was caused by the increasing number of smuggling cases, Putin’s spokesman Dmitry Peskov told the media.

The government regulation published on July 31 doesn't specify a method for destroying confiscated food items, saying that it should be done by any available method that presents no danger to the environment.

The initiative was strongly criticized publicly, with more than 217,000 people having signed a petition on Change.org by Wednesday evening calling for the presidential decree to be repealed and for the food to be given to the needy.

Peskov said Wednesday he would inform Putin of the petition.

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