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Ex-Mayor Luzhkov Suggests Converting Banned Cheese Into Electricity

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A fly sits on cheese, part of illegally imported food falling under restrictions in the territory of Pulkovo airport in St. Petersburg, Russia.

Former mayor of Moscow Yury Luzhkov called the steamrolling of banned foods that began last week across the country a barbarian act and suggested that its conversion into electricity and fertilizers could be a more efficient way to deal with the confiscated produce, Russian daily Izvestia reported Monday.

A decree ordering the destruction of contraband foodstuffs was signed by President Vladimir Putin on July 29, a year after a ban on Western products was introduced in response to sanctions against Russia. Images of tractors bulldozing piles of cheese and fruit during a time of economic crisis sparked outrage among the population last week.

The former mayor, who has devoted himself to his agricultural business in the Kaliningrad region since his dismissal in 2010, told Izvestia that he would never have approved such

radical methods.

Converting the produce into electricity, fertilizer and biofuel, Luzhkov said, would be the most efficient way to deal with it.

“Any organic matter can be converted into electricity,” Luzhkov was cited as saying. “Manure from 1,500 cows can provide enough electricity to illuminate a cowshed and to power all the milking equipment.”

Luzhkov was also quoted as saying that his wife, entrepreneur Yelena Baturina, had purchased German equipment capable of converting organic waste into electricity at a price tag of $500,000.

As of Aug. 8, 332 metric tons of vegetables and 39 metric tons of animal products had been destroyed, the national agricultural watchdog Rosselkhoznadzor stated on its website.

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