

Russia Returns Shipment of Turkish Oranges, Citing Fly Larvae

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Implementation of the restriction has been delayed until the start of 2016, as Moscow officials try to avoid grocery price hikes of Russians' traditional New Year's Eve treat — mandarin oranges.

Russia's agriculture watchdog has returned a 50 ton shipment of mandarin oranges to Turkey, claiming the citrus fruit was contaminated by fruit-fly larvae, the Gazeta.ru news portal reported Monday.

Inspectors detained two consignments of the oranges at a sea port in Russia's southern Krasnodar region, and found them contaminated by "live larvae of the mediterranean fruit fly," a spokesperson for the Rosselkhoznadzor agency was quoted as saying.

Moscow banned fruit and vegetable imports from Turkey as a punitive measure for the shooting down of a Russian warplane near the Turkish-Syrian border. But implementation of the restriction has been delayed until the start of 2016, as Moscow officials try to avoid grocery price hikes or shortages of Russians' traditional New Year's Eve treat — mandarin oranges.

However, ever since Russian President Vladimir Putin threatened sanctions against Ankara for the Nov. 24 downing of the Su-24 bomber, agricultural watchdog officials have been reporting contaminants and health hazards discovered in Turkish produce.

Roselkhoznadzor inspectors recently detained a 6.65-ton shipment of tomatoes in the Russian port of Novorossiisk, claiming they were contaminated by insects of the thrips species, Gazeta.ru reported.

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