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Putin Says He'll Prolong Western Food Ban 'As Long As Possible'

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A worker arranges slabs of meat for sale at a grocery store in Moscow. **Reuters**

President Putin has said he wants to extend Russia's ban on Western food imports as long as possible in order to help local producers. Speaking at an event for the All-Russian People's Front, Putin told his audience that the government had to "create viable conditions" for Russian producers as well as consumers.

Russia's ban on Western food imports came in response to U.S. and EU-imposed sanctions on Russian over involvement in the ongoing Ukraine crisis. The latest extension of the embargo will last till the end of 2017.

While a number of importers initially found ways to sidestep the ban, the resulting government crack down saw kilos of contraband such as foreign cheese destroyed at the border.

While many Russian producers claim to have seen an upturn in sales, rising prices have also hit Russian consumers hard.

Others have highlighted a reported decline in food quality, including Russian producers' increased use of palm oil. Imports of palm oil, which has been linked to higher risks for cardiovascular disease, rose by 7.2 percent in Russia compared to the same period last year, the Interfax news agency reported Tuesday.

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