The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Russians Forced to Cut Back on Dairy as Prices Soar

December 07, 2016



Many Russians have been forced to cut back on basic foodstuffs as prices continue to rise. **Moskva News Agency**

Russian families are being forced to cut back on dairy products as the price of basic food items continues to rise, the RBC news outlet reported Thursday.

One in five shoppers refrained from purchasing "traditional" Russian dairy products such as cream, cottage cheese, yogurt, and milk during September 2016, data from the Nielsen consumer analysis group revealed.

Thirty-six percent said they had cut back on other dairy-based items, such as deserts or probiotic drinks.

Experts blame rising prices for the trend, with the cost of basic items such as butter skyrocketing by 17 percent between October 2015 and October 2016. The price of hard cheeses also rose between 9 and 10 percent, while semi-skimmed milk now costs 5.5 percent

to 7.8 percent more, according to government data.

The Russian dairy market grew 0.9 percent in real terms from September 2015 to October 2016, down from a growth rate of 4.5 percent the previous year.

Food prices began to rise in Russia after the Kremlin launched a food embargo against countries that imposed sanctions on Moscow following the annexation of Crimea in 2014.

The Kremlin claimed that the move would help Russian businesses, and celebrated as Russian cheese production soared in 2015.

However, ordinary Russians have continued to feel the pinch, with 52 percent of consumers switching to less expensive food products as a result of inflation and other economic pressures, Nielsen reported in April 2016.

The food embargo is expected to last at least until the end of 2017.

Russia hopes to be completely self-reliant on domestically produced milk, meat, and vegetables by 2020, Agriculture Minister Alexander Tkachev announced in June.

Warning: This is not cheese. Read more on the shocking secrets behind Russia's counterfeit food industry.

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