

Russia Cracks Down on Belarusian Food Imports

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Russian officials could soon start targeting Belarusian cheese in a new crackdown on food imports.

State agriculture watchdog Rosselkhoznadzor announced on Friday that two major cheese factories had received official warnings over the use of the preservative natamycin.

The Rogachev and Oshmiany cheese factories will see their products barred from Russia if inspectors find further violations, [Russian tabloid Izvestia reported Friday](#).

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Russia announced last month that it would [start tracking all Belarusian food imports](#) as they crossed the border in a bid to “boost food quality.”

It is also seen as a way of fighting smugglers seeking to cash in on Russian sanctions against

the EU by sneaking embargoed Western food products into Russia using Belarusian documents.

The phenomenon has led to several “miracle harvests,” with Belarus exporting five times more apples in 2015 than the country officially harvested.

The head of Russia's Federal Security Service (FSB) also signed an order introducing stricter border controls in Russia's Bryansk, Smolensk and Pskov regions at the start of February.

Minsk has repeatedly denied allegations of widespread smuggling and sub-standard produce, instead claiming that below-par products are being loaded onto Belarusian import trucks within Russia itself.

Critics also claim that the increased border controls breaks existing [treaties](#) and [will harm Russian-Belarusian ties](#).

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