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Russia to Freeze Meat Imports From Brazil

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Russia will temporarily curb pork and beef imports from Brazil after monitors detected a banned growth stimulator in meat shipments.

Brazil ramped up beef, chicken and pork exports to Russia in 2014 when Russia banned food imports from the West in retaliation to sanctions over the Ukrainian crisis.

Its meat producers were put on alert last week when Russia's Veterinary and Phytosanitary Inspection Service said it uncovered pathogenic bacteria in imported beef, pork and poultry.

The veterinary watchdog announced Monday that it planned to freeze beef and pork imports from Brazil starting Dec. 1. The regulator said it made the decision after this year's lab tests turned up ractopamine, a feed additive used to promote leanness in meat.

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Brazil's agriculture minister was later cited by local press as saying the ministry would make sure that ractopamine isn't used in food products sent to Russia.

Russia is one of 160 countries that ban the use of ractopamine, though the hormone is considered safe for human consumption in Brazil, the U.S. and 25 other countries.

Brazil accounts for 90 percent of Russia's imported pork and 40 percent of beef. The Bell business news portal reports that meat prices could go up by anywhere from 5 percent to 20 percent as a result of the temporary import ban.

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