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Imports of Fake Cheese Ingredient Palm Oil Soar in Russia

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Kirill Zykov / Moskva News Agency

Russia has ramped up imports of palm oil, which domestic cheesemakers have used as a cheap substitute to replace high-quality European dairy products, in the first months of 2018, according to official statistics.

Fake cheese has flooded the Russian market after the Kremlin imposed an embargo on Western food imports in response to international sanctions following Russia's annexation of Crimea. Up to a quarter of Russian cheese was recognized as fake due to palm oil use

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Palm oil imports have climbed by 35.8 percent in January-March 2018 as compared to the same period last year, Russia's official statistics agency said in a quarterly report Monday.

At least one-third of all cheese sold in Russia had been imported prior to the food embargo was imposed in August 2014, the Russian National Dairy Producers Union has estimated. Domestic cheeses have since accounted for up to 80 percent of the market.

Russia's ex-agriculture minister has pledged that manufacturers would be required to list palm oil as an ingredient on packaging by mid-2018, the state-run TASS news agency reported.

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