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Russians Start Hoarding Food Over Coronavirus Fears

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A total of 20 coronavirus cases have been reported in Russia. **Moskva News Agency**

Russian consumers have begun panic-buying non-perishable food products over fears of the coronavirus pandemic, the Vedomosti business daily has reported.

A total of 20 coronavirus cases have been reported in Russia, most of whom had recently returned from Italy, since the Covid-19 outbreak began in neighboring China in December. Demand for surgical masks has surged after Russia reported its first coronavirus case in late January, leading Russia to ban exports of the masks last week.

Related article: Russia Bans Export of Masks, Hazmat Suits to Fight Coronavirus

Demand also rose sharply for household chemicals, soap and personal hygiene products in February, online stores told Vedomosti on Saturday.

Wildberries, one of Russia's largest online retailers, reported a 241% year-on-year increase in

the sales of wet wipes, 185% for regular wipes and 175% for toilet paper.

Goods.ru reported a fivefold increase in the sales of household chemicals and a fourfold increase for non-perishables and water, according to Vedomosti.

Another major online marketplace Utkonos reported a 67% sales increase of canned goods and a 55% sales increase in groceries including cereals and pasta.

Traditional retailers including Auchan, X5, Magnit and Lenta denied a buying boom and attributed their sales increases to public holidays observed in Russia. However, the retailers are reportedly preparing for a coronavirus-fueled buying spree with requests for additional deliveries from household chemical manufacturers.

Psychologists told Vedomosti that panic-buying creates the illusion of control for consumers and stems from fear of the unknown and mistrust of the state.

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