The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Butter Prices Spike in Russia. Dairy Producers Blame Ice Cream

November 01, 2024

Alexei Konovalov / TASS

Surging butter prices in Russia have led to increased thefts in some supermarkets and prompted Moscow to boost imports of the staple food product from nearby countries.

According to Rosstat, the state statistics agency, butter prices jumped 25.7% from Jan. 1 to Oct. 28. Rusprodsoyuz, a union of food producers, reported that a kilogram of butter now costs an average of 1,000 rubles ($10.66), up by 20% since January.

Higher production costs, coupled with increased demand for ice cream and cheese, have driven the price surge, according to Soyuzmoloko, the national dairy producer association.

"[Ice cream and cheese] are some of the reasons why the butter and cream market is experiencing tensions," Soyuzmoloko chief Artyom Belov told the Ura.ru news website Friday. "The segments consuming these products have grown significantly [and] are all factors that create additional demand for cream."

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Reports of butter thefts have led some supermarkets to lock the product in plastic containers to prevent shoplifting. Russia, which imports about 25% of its butter, primarily from Belarus, recently imported 20,000 metric tons from Turkey, according to Rosselkhoznadzor, the agricultural watchdog.

Deputy Prime Minister Dmitry Patrushev, who oversees agriculture, said last week that the government would closely monitor butter prices.

While butter has become the latest symbol of Russia's inflation woes, it is not the fastest-rising food item — Rosstat reports that potato prices have surged by 56.4% since the start of 2024.

Last year, rising egg prices were of chief concern for Russian consumers, prompting President Vladimir Putin to issue a televised apology for the surging costs of the staple good.

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