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Russia Restricts Fish Imports From Armenia as Diplomatic Tensions Rise

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Arthur Novosiltsev / Moskva News Agency

Russia will suspend seafood imports from all but two of Armenia's processing plants, the country's agricultural safety watchdog said Monday, adding to a growing list of food and beverage restrictions as Yerevan pursues ties with the European Union.

Rosselkhoznadzor said its decision follows a week of field inspections of fish processing facilities in Armenia and of aquaculture farms specializing in trout breeding and rearing. Half of the companies refused to undergo the process, the agency claimed.

"Based on the results, Armenia must suspend all veterinary certification for shipments of live fish and seafood products bound for Russian recipients from all Armenian companies starting June 2," Rosselkhoznadzor said.

Only two companies that successfully cleared the inspection process will be allowed entry into Russia "under laboratory safety monitoring."

Russia recently restricted the sale or imports of Armenian produce, flowers, mineral water and alcoholic products over various health and safety violations.

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The series of curbs comes ahead of parliamentary elections in Armenia this Sunday, where Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan's Civil Contract party faces a challenge from an array of pro-Russian opposition groups.

Moscow also threatened to rip up a 2013 bilateral agreement guaranteeing Armenia duty-free natural gas and oil if it continues to pursue closer relations with the European Union, including membership in the bloc.

Russian President Vladimir Putin on Friday invoked what he called the "Ukrainian scenario" to warn Armenia against pursuing closer ties with the EU. He called on Armenia to hold a referendum on its economic future "as soon as possible," saying it is "impossible to reconcile" membership in both the EU and the Russian-led Eurasian Economic Union.

Earlier on Monday, Putin sent a telegram wishing Pashinyan a happy 51st birthday.

"Relations between our countries and peoples have traditionally been friendly. We're interested in their further steady development," Putin said in the telegram.

Friction between traditional allies Russia and Armenia has grown since Azerbaijan regained control of the breakaway region of Nagorno-Karabakh in 2023. Armenia accused Russia and its peacekeeping forces of failing to deter Baku's military offensive and, in 2024, froze its participation in a Moscow-led regional security bloc.

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