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Russian Antitrust Service Enlists E-Commerce Sites to Block Speculative Fuel Resales

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Russia's Federal Anti-Monopoly Service (FAS) said Monday that it is working with major e-commerce and digital classifieds platforms to block speculative fuel resales, as authorities introduce a growing number of measures to address fuel shortages triggered by Ukrainian attacks on oil infrastructure.

The popular classifieds site Avito has temporarily hidden all fuel-trading advertisements while it updates its listing policy, according to the Interfax news agency. Major e-commerce marketplaces Ozon and Wildberries, meanwhile, have banned gasoline sales outright.

At the same time, FAS said it instructed its regional branches to tighten oversight on fuel sales in the agricultural sector. Officials will increase compliance checks at oil depots, storage facilities and retail gas stations, the agency said.

Dozens of Russian regions and annexed Ukrainian territories have seen fuel rationing measures slowly introduced at gas stations in recent weeks. The disruptions arrive at a critical time, with both the peak summer travel and agricultural seasons in full swing.

The average price of gasoline in Russia has climbed 6.6% since the start of the year, with a single-week jump pushing national averages to 69.11 rubles per liter ($3.56 per gallon) as of June 15.

Last week, FAS launched investigations into two gas station chains in Moscow over possible price gouging at the pumps. The agency also launched probes into three major fuel traders over alleged cartel activities that are believed to have artificially impacted the price of fuel.

Russia's Energy Ministry established an "industry-wide task force" with the country's largest energy corporations earlier this month to ensure the "stable and efficient operation of the entire energy sector." In doing so, the ministry acknowledged for the first time that Ukrainian drone strikes were directly to blame for the ongoing "difficulties" in the domestic fuel market.

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