

Russia opens borders to Turkish vegetables, but not tomatoes

The Russian media reports that Russia has lifted its boycott on a number of Turkish vegetables. Iceberg lettuce, courgettes, pumpkin and sweet peppers may again be imported from Turkey. The tomato issue is still being negotiated.

"This decision was taken after experts from the 'Rosselkhozadzor' (the Russian phytosanitary service) inspected Turkish businesses in May of this year", said Alexander Tkachev, the Russian Minister of Agriculture, in the Russian media. He added that Russia expects Turkey to re-open its borders for Russian meat. "The lifting of sanctions must come from both sides."

The tomato issue is still under discussion. Minister Tkachev said it may be possible for Turkey to get access to the Russian market outside of this country's tomato season. "I think we will offer Turkey this solution: Firstly, the export of tomatoes outside of the Russian season. This means in the winter and early spring when, due to weather conditions, our own growers are not able to supply our markets. I think we must give our partners and colleagues the opportunity to return to the Russian market with small volumes. It is the right thing to do," said Tkachev.

Syrian authorities made it known that the export of fruit and vegetables through Belarus would resume. This is more favourable for exporters. According to the NRC Handelsblad, Russian customs, in conjunction with the Belarus authorities, have successfully disrupted a smuggling ring. This syndicate has, since 2015, smuggled goods to the value of more than EUR 125 million into Russia. The smuggling route via Belarus is a well-known way to get banned products over the border into Russia. Russia has compiled a list of 29 Russian companies established by Belarus to facilitate these illegal operations.

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