

Russian fruit and berry production to surge by 2024

Russian state investments in the fruit and berry planted area should bear fruit in 2024 and increase production by 41%, according to the government.

The Agriculture Ministry said that, thanks to the state programme for the development of the agro-industrial complex, Russian investments in 2018 saw a 160% increase to RUB5.6 billion (USD81.0 million). The ministry added that 2019 is expected to be another record year for state investments in the sector.

The total area of perennial fruit and berry plantation in Russia should increase by 68,000 hectares, which is predicted to boost production by 41% in 2024. By then, the gross industrial harvest should reach 1.7 mln tonnes. Russian fruit production continues to be dominated by apples, pears, plums, sweet and sour cherries, apricots, peaches, currants, raspberries and strawberries.

IEG Vu notes that, as we have previously covered, the latest data seems to be lower than that of October 2018, when the Agriculture Minister said Russia plans to expand perennial fruit plantations by 100,000 ha by 2025.

Since 2013, Russia's planted area has expanded by 78,400 ha, with the territories in Russia's European south territories (Krasnodar, Kabardino-Balkaria, Dagestan, Belgorod and Chechnya territories) leading the way.

Russia is increasingly keen on becoming self-sufficient in fruit and berries yet continues importing uncontrollable amounts of produce from other countries.

Apple quotas

Russia's government believes that limitless fresh apple imports into Russia are hampering domestic production, which is why the National



Union of Fruit and Vegetable Producers (NUFVP) proposes establishing a quota to regulate the flow of foreign product entering Russia during peak harvest time.

Last year, Russia imported 843,461 tonnes of apples (up 20%), with top supplier Moldova shipping 29.2% of the total, or 246,033 tonnes. At the same time, the combined industrial and smallholder farm crop reached 1.05 mln tonnes, according to NUFVP.

Anatoly Kutsenko, head of the union, expressed concern that cheap apples are bought by retailers or other suppliers directly from foreign manufacturers without any prior attestation, without understanding the cultivation technology and without confirming pesticide use in the production process.

According to Kutsenko, to achieve the goal of lower imports the state could subsidise the construction of cold storage by at least 50%, or issue grants that would cover at least 60% of the cost for businesses.

“Modern coldstore facilities will not appear without state support. And they need to build and modernise storage for at least 1.2 mln tonnes of apples alone by 2025,” he added.

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