

European Import Duties on Potash Expire

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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BRUSSELS — The European Union cut import duties on potash from Russia and Belarus on Wednesday, ending almost 20 years of trade barriers against the imported fertilizer and prompting praise from British farmers.

Import duties of up to 27.5 percent expired on potash exports by Russia's Silvinit and Uralkali.

The lapsing of the duties deals a victory to European farmers who have been lobbying for cheaper access to the fertilizer.

EU potash producers — German minerals firm K+S and the Spanish and British operations of Israel Chemicals — had asked for an extension until at least 2016 to counteract illegal export pricing by producers in Russia and Belarus.

"The Commission has listened to our arguments and recognizes that it is in the interest of European agriculture to be able to source key inputs from across the world at the most competitive prices," Ian Backhouse, of Britain's National Farmers' Union, said in a statement.

Sources familiar with the case said European potash producers' profits had been strong enough to allow the decision not to extend protective duties, though the standard import duties will remain in place.

European producers said the change in duties would have limited impact on their business.

"Due to the currently very good overall state of the market, the potash producers grouped in the European Potash Producers Association believe that the effects on operating business will be moderate," said K+S spokesman Michael Wudonig.

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