

Russia Sends Cheese Shipments Back to Italy

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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Parmesan cheese.

ROME — Russia has sent entire shipments of Grana Padano cheese back to Italy and cancelled exports of pears from Modena under a food import ban which could cost Italy at least 200 million euros, an agriculture group said Friday.

Russia's ban on imports of specific foods from countries that have imposed sanctions over the Ukraine crisis puts at risk exports which were worth about 228 million euros (\$306 million) in 2013, the Coldiretti group said.

"We are facing a worrying escalation of the conflict, with a trade war that confirms that food is strategic above all in times of recession," Coldiretti president Roberto Moncalvo said in a statement.

On Thursday, Moscow announced a one-year proscription on imports of meat, fish, dairy,

fruit and vegetables from the United States, European Union, Canada, Australia and Norway.

Italy, home of Parmesan cheese and Prosecco wine, is proud of its rich culture of cooking, eating and drinking. Coldiretti says food and drink exports made 34 billion euros in 2013, as the wider Italian economy struggled to emerge from a recession to which it returned in the second quarter of this year.

Italian exports of food and drink to Russia were worth a record 706 million euros in 2013, Coldiretti said, and rose a further one percent in the first four months of 2014 despite conflict in the ex-Soviet region.

The ban does not affect alcohol, which should protect the wine and sparkling wine which made up 16 percent of Italy's food and drink imports to Russia last year, Coldiretti said.

In 2013, Russia bought Italian fruit and vegetables worth 72 million euros, meat worth 61 million euros, dairy products worth 72 million euros and pasta worth 50 million euros, Coldiretti said, adding that the possibility of surplus foreign food arriving in Italy could translate into further losses for producers.

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