

Romania helps Moldova to become independent of the Russian market

The agriculture ministries of Romania and Moldova, as well as business representatives from both countries, agreed at the beginning of September that Romania will quintuple its imports of Moldovan fruit (mainly apples and grapes). This decision has an important political dimension, as it was taken after Russia imposed a partial embargo on imports of agricultural products from Moldova.

An increase in the import of Moldovan fruit would mean some diversification of Moldovan agricultural exports (which currently make up 21% of all Moldovan exports), as well as partial independence for Moldova from the Russian market. Until now Romania has been taking in around 7% of Moldovan agricultural exports, while Russia's share has been over 30%.

The Romanian decision is part of Bucharest's policy of actively supporting the current pro-European government in Chisinau and intensifying the co-operation between both countries. During the last few months, Romania has reduced consular fees for Moldovans by a third; agreed to recognize certificates from Moldovan educational institutions; increased the number of grants for Moldovans to pursue higher education in Romania to 5000; opened two consulates; announced the creation of a Centre for Romanian Business in Chisinau; increased the frequency and reduced the ticket price of rail links between the two countries; undertaken to train diplomats and pilots; and signed a range of agreements on co-operation between state institutions (including radio stations, energy market regulators, and academies of sciences). <wrod>