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Russia expands its embargo on Moldovan goods

On 24 August, Moldova's Ministry of Agriculture stated that Russia had almost completely blocked its imports of Moldovan fruits and vegetables. The official reason for this was that pesticides had allegedly been discovered in them. The Russian government's decision is the latest trade restriction imposed on Moldova, after the informal introduction at the beginning of August of a partial embargo on the import of wine. In this way Russia demonstrated its dissatisfaction with the ruling pro-Western coalition's policy, and is also attempting to influence the result of the parliamentary elections scheduled for autumn.

Rospotrebnadzor, the Russian service for sanitary supervision, imposed a ban on imports from 144 of the 177 Moldovan companies which supply vegetable products to Russia. This has hit Moldovan producers hard; at the height of the harvest, they have now been deprived of access to their biggest sales market (Russia takes up to 80% of Moldova's vegetable produce).

Russia's decision, as in the case of the significant restriction of wine imports, is political in nature, and is part of Moscow's response to the historical policy of the acting president Mihai Ghimpu (including the introduction of a day commemorating Moldova's occupation by the USSR, and awarding high distinctions to veterans of the Transnistria war). At the same time, Russia is counting on influencing the political mood of the Moldovan public, leading to the break-up of the pro-Western coalition and a strengthening of support for the pro-Russian parties. Hopes of resolving this dispute in the near future seem small, and on 22 August Rospotrebnadzor's head Gennady Onishchenko stated that he would not send inspectors to Moldova because of the Moldovan government's 'unconstructive' behaviour. <WojK>