

Syria to export 700,000 tons of citrus to Russia: official

DAMASCUS - Syria will export more than 700,000 tons of citrus fruits to Russia to "fill the gap" left by Moscow's ban on Turkish agricultural products, officials said Tuesday.



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"We are preparing some 700,000 tons of citrus, mostly oranges, to send to Russian markets," Fares Chehabi, head of Syria's Chambers of Industry, told AFP.

Russia, a major ally of Syria's embattled regime, banned imports of Turkish agricultural products last month after Ankara shot down a Russian fighter jet near the Syrian-Turkish border.

"The first shipment has already left for Russia," Chehabi said, without confirming its size.

He said other Syrian goods, such as textile products, would also be sent to Russia.

Samer Debes, head of the Damascus Chamber of Industry, told state news agency SANA the shipments provided "a real opportunity" for Syrian goods in the Russian market.

He said Syrian businessmen were preparing for an upcoming trip to Moscow to "examine the chances of cooperation after the sanctions that Moscow imposed on Ankara."

These sanctions "create an important gap and suddenly a real opportunity for Syrian products," Debes was quoted as saying.

During the 2014-2015 season, Syria produced some 1,050,000 tons of citrus products, according to the agriculture ministry.

Syria's citrus is grown mostly in the coastal provinces of Latakia and Tartus, which are regime strongholds.

Source: AFP

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