

Indian companies to export cheese to Russia soon

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Russia will soon get to taste Indian cheese. Domestic dairy producers – Parag Milk Foods and Schreiber Dynamix Dairies Ltd – got approval to export cheese to Russia on April 23. Parag, which sells milk and milk products under the Go and Gowardhan brands, will source the products from its cheese factory in Manchar, near Pune.

Schreiber Dynamix Dairies Ltd couldn't be immediately reached for comments. "Russians consume more than 200,000 tonnes of cheese per year. It's a huge quantity. Recently, we got approval to export. We will start with exporting samples of our cheese very soon," said Devendra Shah, chairman, Parag Milk Foods. Last year, after Western countries imposed sanctions over the Ukraine crisis, Russia retaliated by stopping imports of cheese and other food products from Europe.

While there are a lot of local Russian firms supplying cheese at present, Indian companies also see the Russian market as a growth opportunity to export hard cheese such as Cheddar, Gouda and Emmental. Hard cheese is popular in western countries, but finds little takers in India, where processed cheese is commonly consumed. Parag is in talks with nine distributors in Russia to sell its products, said officials. The company also has plans to export other milk products to Russia in future, Shah added.

Parag currently exports to 37 countries, mainly in Asia. Russia will be among its first big markets outside Asia. Authorities from Rosselkhoznadzor, Russian federal inspection agency, visited the company's plant in Manchar, and approved export of hard cheese from there. Parag is also planning to tap the US market in a big way with its milk products, particularly ghee and paneer, targeting the huge Indian diaspora there.