

Organic food production

Excerpts from Dmitry Medvedev's opening remarks at a Government meeting

Dmitry Medvedev: Today we will be mostly discussing draft laws. Let us begin with the federal law On the Production of Organic Foods.

Organics has become a popular subject in the past few years. Many people are concerned about their health and try to eat healthy foods. They buy chemical-free vegetables and fruit and the meat of animals and poultry that have been raised on organic feed without antibiotics or growth hormones.

The global market of organic foods is growing in leaps and bounds, which makes organic farming one of the most promising agricultural businesses. According to experts, Russia can come to occupy between 10 and 25 percent of this market, up to a quarter of the market.

We have vast tracts of farmland. Some of them have been lying unused for a long time – we held a meeting on this issue yesterday – which is both a problem, because we need to devise a way to use this land, and a natural advantage, because they are free of chemicals. Our task is to use this land effectively and to encourage the farmers who are willing to do this.

Russia's organic foods market can be described as mostly unsystematic, although we do have some national standards. The adoption of this law will create a clear legal framework for developing this segment of agriculture.

The draft law sets out the basic notions and definitions of organic foods, as well as production principles and the competencies of the federal authorities and local governments in this field.

By the way, you can see the term "organic" on foods that are not at all organic. People cannot understand how such products differ from those that are labelled "bio," "eco," "agro" or "natural." The adoption of this law will prevent misinformation of consumers and protect their rights. We will approve standards for the use of organic labels, which will be placed only on foods bearing a compliance certificate. Those who violate these requirements will be held administratively liable.

Producers will be able to request certification of their production methods. We will create a unified state register of such producers, which will be open to the public. Such producers will also be able to receive government support.

Of course, all kinds of foods should remain available in stores following the adoption of this law, including both conventional and organic foods.

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