

Russia is imposing a "full embargo" on food imports from the EU, US and some other Western countries, in response to sanctions over Ukraine.

Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev said it would include fruit, vegetables, meat, fish, milk and dairy imports.

Australia, Canada and Norway are also affected.

Elsewhere, Nato chief Anders Fogh Rasmussen said Ukraine's freedom and future were "under attack," promising support against Russian "aggression".

The latest developments come during heightened tensions between Russia and the West over Ukraine, where heavy shelling was reported in the eastern rebel stronghold of Donetsk on Thursday.

Airspace ban

In addition to the food imports embargo, Russia is banning Ukrainian airlines from transit across its territory, Mr Medvedev said in televised comments to the government.

The Russian government is also considering banning transit flights for EU and US airlines in retaliation for sanctions over Ukraine, he said.

Barring airlines from Siberian airspace would significantly increase costs and flying time for many jets bound for Asian destinations.

EU [food exports to Russia last year](#) were worth 11.8bn euros (£9bn; \$15.8bn) while US food exports to Russia were worth 972m euros (£772m; \$1.3bn).

Russia was the EU's second-biggest market for food exports (10% of total), after the US (13%).

The European Commission said the Russian embargo was "clearly politically motivated". It is considering how to respond.

Western governments accuse the Kremlin of fomenting the unrest in eastern Ukraine by supplying weapons and expertise to the pro-Russian separatists.

Nato's Anders Fogh Rasmussen, speaking during a visit to Kiev on Thursday, called on Russia to stop supporting the rebels and pull back its troops from Ukraine's border.

Russia "should not use peace-keeping as an excuse for war-making", he is quoted by Reuters as saying.

Last month the EU and US tightened sanctions on Russia, with Brussels applying restrictions to key sectors of the economy as well as individuals. The first round of sanctions came after Russia annexed Ukraine's Crimea region in March.

Sourcing food in Russia

President Vladimir Putin said on Wednesday that the food embargo would take immediate effect and last for a year.

Mr Medvedev ordered the agriculture ministry and producer organisations to find ways to [boost Russian farm output](#) in order to prevent price rises for consumers.

The Russian authorities say they are confident the supermarket shelves will not be left empty - they are searching for alternative suppliers in South America, Turkey and China.

But filling the gap will not be easy, the BBC's Steve Rosenberg reports from Moscow. It is estimated that in big cities, like Moscow, more than 60% of food in the shops is imported.

Researchers at Capital Economics say "far and away the most vulnerable to the Russian sanctions is Lithuania, where exports of the banned products to Russia are equivalent to 2.5% of GDP".

But they add that "the biggest loser from the import ban looks set to be Russia".

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