

## Overseas fruit exporters enter the Russian market via Turkey

Overseas fruit exporters, from South Africa and South America among others, are trying to get their fruit to Russia via Turkey. Turkish fruit exporters report that they are being called nonstop by overseas producers who have unloaded their products in the port of Istanbul. By allowing imports from Turkey, Russia seems to be securing its food supply and other exporters are trying to hitch a ride on this.

There is no question of a smooth flow of the fruit, as the roads from Turkey's eastern border via Georgia to Russia have become seriously congested as a result, and the waiting time has now risen to three days. For the Russians, importing fruit has become an expensive business after the fall of the rouble, but in the absence of alternatives, they still choose this trade flow.

Turkey and Russia are important trade partners in the area of fresh produce. Last year, almost 30% of Russia's imports of fresh fruit and vegetables (excluding bananas) came from Turkey. Russia imports almost 7 million tons of fresh fruit and vegetables annually. Excl. bananas this amount was around 5.3 million tons in 2021 as in 2020.

Despite earlier reports, Turkey seems to be exempted from the boycott. Turkey is in a difficult position, because it is trying to maintain good relations with both Ukraine and Russia. By closing the strategic Bosphorus strait to four Russian naval vessels, Turkey has ensured that Russia has far fewer cruise missiles in the Black Sea to deploy against Ukraine than planned.

Turkey has been supplying armed drones to Ukraine for some time. The drones - previously deployed in Syria, Libya, Ethiopia and Azerbaijan - are an indispensable weapon for the Ukrainians in their fight against the Russians. It is possible that the use of this weapon will eventually provoke Russian anger. On Thursday, Ankara rushed to emphasise that it was not 'military aid' but a 'private sale'.

At the same time, despite EU requests, the country announced no sanctions against Russia. Turkish airspace therefore remains open to Russian planes and in seaside resorts such as Antalya, entrepreneurs are still hoping for a summer with millions of Russian visitors. Selim Koru, analyst at the Turkish think tank Tepav: "It is very clear that Turkey does not want to jeopardise its relationship with Russia."

For global fruit exporters, this provides an opportunity for the moment to sell their fruit on the large Russian market after all.