

# Food supply programme to the Russian Federation

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The Commission announced in a working document that, following the visit of the President of the Commission, Mr. Santer, to Moscow (9 October 1998) and the subsequent EU-Russia summit in Vienna (27 September 1998), a delegation of high-level Commission officials went to Moscow for a fact-finding mission in order to discuss the difficult Russian food situation with the Russian government. The meeting and discussions between the parties resulted in the conclusion that there will be substantial food shortages in certain regions in the northern and eastern parts of Russia this winter. As a result, the most severely affected Russian regions are in an urgent need for food supply from abroad. On 12 November 1998, Russia transmitted a formal request for 1 million tonnes of wheat, 500,000 tonnes of rye, 500,000 tonnes of rice, 150,000 tonnes of beef, 100,000 tonnes of pork, 50,000 tonnes of skimmed milk powder and 30,000 tonnes of macaroni. According to the request, the products included would be sold in the most severely affected Russian regions at prevailing market prices. For its part, the Russian government would give assurances to the European Union to apply full transparency and to take the necessary measures and controls in order to ensure that the food is distributed to the people in need in the regions concerned. A Memorandum of Understanding on implementation of the food aid programme requested by Russia was initialled jointly in Moscow on 3 December 1998 and lists the regions to which the food will be sent and the quantities allocated to them. Most European aid will be sent to the regions in the centre, with the exception of Moscow and St. Petersburg. Implementation of the programme will be subject to compliance with strict terms of use and distribution. These terms have been included in the Memorandum of Understanding which states that: - control of the supply and the use of the proceeds of the sale for social needs will be exercised jointly by the competent Russian authorities and the Court of Auditors of the European Union (the Douma is to set up a special control committee); - re-exportation of the European Union food will be prohibited; - the European Union will be entitled to cease the operation unilaterally in the event of irregularities. Under the Memorandum of Agreement, the Commission may now submit a formal proposal to the Council and the European Parliament detailing the procedure for the supply operations to be deployed this winter to the neediest populations and regions of Russia. This proposal will be submitted as a matter of urgency.