

Consumption of Alcohol To Drop by 5% This Year

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Consumption of alcohol will drop 5 percent this year by volume, with imported drinks expected to suffer most, falling by 12 to 13 percent in 2009, **Business Analytica** said Wednesday in an e-mailed statement. It is not clear whether alcohol use will fall by 5 percent in per capita terms, however, because of unreliable data on migrants in Russia, the statement said.

In ruble terms, the Russian alcohol market is expected to remain the same as in 2008, at around 1.3 trillion rubles, but in dollars it will fall 19 percent to \$38 billion. Among imported beverages, rum and whisky will suffer least, while consumption of cognac, tequila, gin and liqueurs may fall by 20 to 25 percent as Russians switch to cheaper domestic spirits.

President Dmitry Medvedev told Health and Social Development Minister Tatyana Golikova on June 30 that he was shocked by Russians' "colossal" drinking.

"I was astonished to learn that we now drink more than we did in the 1990s, although those were very tough times," Medvedev said.

Half of Russians aged 15 to 54 died of alcohol-related diseases in the 1990s, The Lancet medical journal reported last month.

The country has become a key market for European brewers, which are rapidly expanding eastward to gain market share. The Beer Producers Union said in March that Russian beer sales rose 15 percent last year.

<http://www.moscowtimes.ru/article/1009/42/379559.htm>