Iran's exports to Russia can reach $10b this year: *Businessman*

Yet our share of Russia's $270b market negligible

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INTERVIEW

Economic relations between Iran and Russia, in recent years, simultaneously with the expansion of political ties between the two countries, have entered a new phase. The implementation of the free trade agreement with the Eurasian Economic Union, the development of transportation corridors, and the endeavor to strengthen financial and banking mechanisms have provided the groundwork for an increase in commercial exchanges between the two countries.

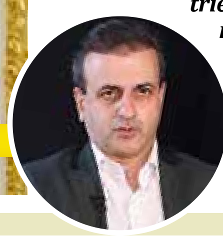
In the meantime, Iran's exports to Russia have also experienced an ascending trajectory and, from approximately $270 million in the year 1397 (March 21, 2018–March 20, 2019), after several stages of growth, surpassed $1 billion in the past year for the first time; a figure that is estimated to reach approximately $1.4 billion this year with so much more room for improvement.

Despite this growth, economic actors maintain that the current figure of Iran's exports has a considerable distance from the actual capacity of the Russian market. Russia annually has approximately $270 billion in imports, and Iran's share of this market remains extremely limited. For this reason, targeting an increase in exports to several billion dollars and even reaching the figure of $10 billion, in the event of the removal of existing obstacles, has been placed on the agenda of economic actors.

Nevertheless, the path to reaching such a goal does not depend solely on political relations and trade agreements between the two countries. Currency problems, the costly nature of transportation, limitations of rail and maritime capacities, bureaucratic complexities, the multiplicity of systems, frequent changes of directives, and the instability of domestic regulations are among the obstacles that, according to private sector actors, have reduced the competitive power of Iranian exporters. These problems can even propel Russian trade counterparts toward the use of indirect and intermediary routes.

On the other hand, the limitations that have been created in recent years for some of Iran's competitors in the Russian market, alongside Iran's possession of land and maritime routes with its neighboring country, have created a new opportunity for the development of the presence of Iranian goods in this market; an opportunity that, according to economic actors, in the event of long-term planning and precise understanding of the Russian consumer's taste, can lead to the stabilization of Iranian brands in this market.

Kambiz Mirkarimi, vice president of the Iran-Russia Joint Chamber of Commerce, in the following exclusive interview with Iran Daily, delineated the trajectory of export growth to Russia and examined the most important obstacles to the development of trade between the two countries in the domains of currency, banking, logistics, and domestic regulations. He maintains that with the rectification of these obstacles, the attainment of $10 billion in exports to Russia is not a remote goal. Mirkarimi, at the same time, emphasizes the necessity of changing the approach of economic policymaking, reducing bureaucracy, and creating stability for exporters.



Kambiz Mirkarimi

IRAN DAILY: Considering the recent trip of Iran's minister of Economy to Russia and the importance of relations between the two countries, how do you assess the current state of economic relations between Iran and Russia?

MIRKARIMI: Relations between the two countries in the domain of exports have had an ascending trajectory from the Persian calendar year of 1398 (March 21, 2018–March 20, 2019) until now, and this trajectory continues. For years, we faced a serious problem, and our ratio of exports to imports was approximately one to four; that is, against every single unit that we exported to Russia, we had approximately four times that in imports.

One of the important occurrences was the implementation of the free trade agreement with the Eurasian Economic Union, which rendered considerable assistance to Iran's exports. We are now moving toward a more balanced equilibrium in trade, and the ratio of exports to imports is gradually moving toward becoming 50-50. Of course, we have not yet reached this point, and it must be noted that we are at the beginning of the implementation of this mechanism.

Russian President Vladimir Putin (front-R) guides his Iranian counterpart, Masoud Pezeshkian (front-L), at the Kremlin in Moscow on January 17, 2025.
VYACHESLAV PROKOFYEV/AFP

Iran's exports to Russia, in the past year, surpassed $1 billion for the first time, and my estimation is that this year we can reach approximately $1.4 billion.

How has the trajectory of the growth of Iran's exports to Russia been in past years?

If we look at past figures, we have had considerable growth. In the year 1397, Iran's exports to Russia were approximately $270 million. In the first year of the implementation of the trade agreement with Eurasia, our exports increased by approximately 61%.

Even at the peak of the coronavirus era, when trade in the world had encountered limitations by virtue of this disease, the ascending trajectory of Iran's exports to Russia continued and surpassed the $500 million threshold. Thereafter, the increase continued and exports reached approximately $750 million, and in the past year, surpassed the $1 billion threshold for the first time.

Our prediction is that this year this figure will reach higher numbers. Therefore, the overall trajectory demonstrates that if existing obstacles are reduced, the capacity for export increase is far greater than current figures.

Iran's Economy Minister Ali Madanizadeh (2nd-R) meets with Dmitry Zverev (2nd-L), Russia's deputy minister of Transport, in Moscow, Russia, on September 9, 2026.
IRNA

Has only the value of exports increased, or has the composition of exported goods also changed?

The composition of exports is an extremely important matter. Today, a considerable portion of our exports to Russia no longer merely includes oil, minerals, or raw goods. Manufactured goods, products possessing added value, and the food industry have a considerable share in exports, and the diversity of exported goods has also increased.

This matter is of great importance because the export of goods possessing added value both assists domestic production and can create employment and foreign currency revenue. Therefore, we must endeavor for this trajectory to continue and for Iranian products to be present in the Russian market with greater brand and added value.

What capacity does the Russian market have for Iran's exports?

Russia has an extremely large market; the imports of this country are approximately $270 billion, while Iran's exports to this country are still slightly more than $1 billion. That is, our share of this market is extremely small, and this very matter demonstrates that an extremely great capacity for growth exists.

In my belief, reaching $10 billion in exports to Russia is not an ambitious and remote goal. If the current trajectory continues and some principal obstacles are removed, one can approach this figure in an appropriate time period. Of course, for this task, we must amend the transportation infrastructure, banking relations, and domestic regulations.

At present, what is the most important obstacle to the development of exports to Russia?

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