



The impact of the conflict in Ukraine on food shortages in Africa

Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)



From a separated world to global peace: the need
for a new look on institutions



Forum: Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)

Issue: The impact of the conflict in Ukraine on food shortages in Africa.

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Introduction

Ukraine and Russia together are responsible for a big part of the wheat and sunflower oil supply, amongst other things, worldwide. Due to their conflict in Ukraine the quality as well as the quantity of those products have plummeted. This is mostly due to people leaving their farmland to fight or farmland getting destroyed as a direct result of the fighting. This leads to raised food prices and severely affects food security in multiple African countries, who heavily depend on this import for their food supplies. Food shortages caused by price increases have led to an increasing amount of people suffering from food insecurity.

Russia is the biggest supplier of fertilisers in the world. Those prices have increased significantly in the past couple of years due to the Covid-19 pandemic and the conflict in Ukraine, causing further strain on food resources in the near future.

The blockades on the Ukrainian black sea ports have limited the export even further, leaving part of the grain in silos within the country unused. Although some of these ports are opening up again, the procedures are going slow and most of them remain closed.

As a result of Russian and Ukrainian exports being limited, India, second grain producer worldwide, has limited its own export. Their main argument for this is to safeguard their own reserves. 22 other countries, such as Malaysia and Iran, have also placed limitations on their export following India's argument. This blocked the export of 17.3% of the world's food calories being traded globally.



Definition of Key Term

Food insecurity

The condition of not having access to sufficient food, or food of an adequate quality, to meet one's basic needs.

Conflict in Ukraine

The Russian invasion of Ukraine and the further fighting in the country. Although it technically started with the annexation of Crimea, this research report mainly focuses on the invasion in February 2022.

Sanctions

A penalty placed upon a country by other countries or organisations for disobeying rules. In the case of Russia mostly economic sanctions limiting international trade.

Fertilisers

A chemical or natural substance added to soil or land to increase its fertility. There are different kinds but they all serve the same purpose.



General Overview

Import and export data prior to the invasion

Nearly 40 percent of the population of the African continent (374 million people) are dependent for over 56 percent on Russian and Ukrainian wheat imports. Most dependent countries include: Eritrea (100%), Somalia (90%) and Egypt (80%).

Ukraine mainly grows and exports wheat, corn and barley. According to the European Commission, Ukraine accounts for 10% of the world wheat market, 15% of the corn market, and 13% of the barley market. With more than 50% of world trade, it is also the main player on the sunflower oil market.

Russian fertiliser exports account for about 15% of global nitrogenous fertiliser exports. It also produces 14% of phosphates and 21% of the potash globally. Russia produces a significant amount of grains, seeds and oils on top of that.

Food production and trade after the invasion

Ukrainian harvests have dropped significantly as a direct result of the invasion. Crops have either been destroyed or abandoned when the fighting started. Russian troops are estimated to have stolen 1.9 billion US dollars' worth of Ukrainian grain during the conflict. As a result of Russian and Ukrainian exports being limited, India, second grain producer worldwide, has limited its own export. Their main argument for this is to safeguard their own reserves. 22 other Countries, such as Malaysia and Iran, have also placed limitations on their export following India's argument. This blocked the export of 17.3% of the world's calories being traded globally.

Fertilisers

Fertiliser prices have risen by around 250% since 2019, just before Covid-19 hit, according to the UN. Because of those increases, many farmers cannot afford to buy fertiliser, resulting in a loss of around 66 million tons of staple foods such as rice and grains. This could have fed nearly half the world population for a month. Although the increases already started before the conflict escalated, after the escalation they drove up even further.

Sanctions

Even though Western sanctions do not influence food or fertilisers to avoid food shortages worldwide, they still impact their trade. Because logistics firms, banks, insurance providers and others involved with the trade fear they might face those sanctions when shipping to and from Russia, they suspended business there. This results in a needless loss of food exports.



Major Parties Involved

Russia

World's largest exporter of wheat and fertilisers, as well as exporting a big chunk of sunflower oil and barley. They invaded Ukraine under the guise of a special military operation, making them face lots of sanctions from multiple parties, such as the EU and USA.

Ukraine

Used to be responsible for up to 9 percent of the global wheat trade. It is also a big exporter of sunflower oil and seeds. Ukrainian ports have been blocked by Russia as a direct result of the conflict, limiting export.

African Union

The AU was established in July 2002 to promote unity and solidarity of African states, to spur economic development, and to promote international cooperation. It is made up of 55 member states, which is all the states in the continent that the UN recognizes and Western Sahara. Most member states condemn the invasion, as they are dependent on their import for food supply, even though they plead for a de-escalation of the conflict.



Timeline of Events

24 February 2022	Russia invades Ukraine
24 February 2022	Ukraine's Black sea ports are blockaded by Russian warships
2 March 2022	UN resolution passed in GA demanding Russia to immediately end military operation Ukraine
27 July 2022	UN resolution passed in Istanbul reopening Ukrainian ports at the Black Sea.
29 November 2022	Russia starts shipping donated fertilisers to Africa



Previous attempts to solve the issue

Black Sea Grain Initiative

For this UN initiative, two task forces were assembled. One focused on the shipment of Ukrainian grain through the Black Sea, and the other on facilitating exports of Russian food and fertilisers. This is mainly based on reopening some of the blocked Ukrainian ports. Ukraine has made efforts to speed up the inspection process of ships within these ports but has failed. They believe that there would be more benefits in speeding up this process than trying to get more than three of the thirteen ports to reopen, as it can take up to several weeks for a cargo ship to pass through these ports.

Russian donation of fertiliser to prevent crop loss in Africa

On November 29th the first ship of Russian fertilisers stored in the Netherlands set out to Malawi. It is estimated that this ship will take at least a month to reach Mozambique, after which the 20.000 metric tons of fertiliser will be transported by land to Malawi. After UN interference Russia will donate 260.000 metric tons of fertiliser to multiple African countries. This is to prevent further crop loss, and with that food shortages in the near future.



Possible solutions

Promoting deals between farm equipment companies and local farmers

By using more machinery in farming, the work intensity for a certain amount of produce drops and more food can be produced in less time. It is estimated that the continent of Africa has around 60% of the world's unexploited arable land. By using more advanced equipment more of this land can be cultivated, resulting in a decrease of food insecurity in the future.

These deals could be sponsored by third parties, such as NGO's or private investors. This could lower the threshold for small farmers to invest in heavier machinery. It could give financial gain to the private investors in the long run, apart from just helping with the food shortages.

Urging Russia to speed up procedures at ports

The grain reserves in Ukrainian silos are slowly being depleted through the ports near the Black Sea that used to be blockaded by Russian military ships. Although they have been opening up, Ukraine suggests that procedures regarding checking cargo ships take unnecessary amounts of time, as it can take up to several weeks for a ship to pass through. Ukraine recommends speeding up those procedures for easier distribution, opposed to potentially opening up more of these ports. Both speeding up procedures and opening up more ports could be a solution to get more of the grain reserves to Africa.

Recommending countries that limited their export to continue food export

22 countries have decided to limit their exports to ensure their own food resources. This totals to about 17,3% of the global food calories. This drives up food prices elsewhere and causes further shortages worldwide. Therefore it is suggested to increase those exports to prevent further price increases and shortages of food. If all those countries increase their exports, food shortages will be reduced as it is not just one state getting rid of their excess food.



Useful documents

Aggression against Ukraine : resolution / adopted by the General Assembly

<https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/3965290?ln=en>

Implications of Russia's invasion of Ukraine on wheat supplies to Africa

https://www.policycenter.ma/sites/default/files/2022-04/PB_23-22_Vedie%20EN.pdf



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