

The Ukrainian War's Impact on Food Security

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Abstract:

The war in Ukraine is causing problematic disruptions far beyond the country's national borders. Black Sea shipping routes have been disrupted to the extent the Ukrainian grain exports are being kept from global markets, thereby jeopardizing food security in some regions of the world.

Introduction. As the war in Ukraine approaches its sixth month, the conflict appears to be threatening the supply of grain to several other nations, thereby endangering international food supplies. The disruption to Black Sea shipping routes as a result of the armed conflict not only hinders Ukrainian grain exports to other nations, but also impedes storage capacity for harvested grains since lack of exporting capability means silos remain full and unable to accept newer harvests.

Discussion. Antonio Guterres, UN Secretary-General, has warned that the war in Ukraine will worsen food, energy and economic crises in poor countries (Bankova et al, 2022). "It threatens to tip tens of millions of people over the edge into

food insecurity followed by malnutrition, mass hunger and famine, in a crisis that could last for years (ibid)” Guterres said.

Approximately 20 million tons of grain are sitting in storage in Ukraine, largely because of disrupted shipping in the Black Sea and logistical difficulties in using rail and truck transport over land routes. This represents “a slow-moving crisis that is choking Ukraine off from the global economy and cutting the rest of the world off from Ukraine’s critical supply of grains.” (Kirby, 20220)

According to Weil and Zachmann (2022), the countries most vulnerable to reduced Ukrainian agricultural exports are in the Middle East and North Africa. Excluding high-income countries, the most at risk are Jordan, Yemen, Israel and Lebanon (ibid). Data on Libya is harder to come by, but the authors claim that Ukraine provides 40% of Libya’s cereal imports.

The disruptions cited above are considered short term, but the war in Ukraine is also causing medium to long-range problems due to damaged infrastructure including farmland that cannot be planted due to the hostilities. Many farmers have also been summoned for military duty and are unable to cultivate their farmlands.

The conflict-caused reduction in Ukrainian grain exports is part of a larger humanitarian and economic crises impacting other nations. Food and energy shortages are fueling inflation in much of the world as supply falls short of demand and prices increase as a result.

Conclusion

Some recommendations for reducing food insecurity growing from the war in Ukraine are:

Emphasize the export of Ukrainian grain to ease shortages in certain areas of the World.

Open the Black Sea port of Odessa and others to facilitate grain exports and open up storage capacity for Ukrainian grain harvests.

Take advantage of recent Ukrainian-Russian prisoner exchanges and Turkish sponsored bilateral talks to open Black Sea shipping lanes for export of Ukrainian goods. With international encouragement, aim for ceasefire and mediated discussions to end the armed conflict.

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