

# Russia-Ukraine Conflict Might Trigger Global Food Crisis

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*Much is talked today about the fuel and energy crises that the current conflict in Ukraine can worsen. Not so much is talked, though, about how food insecurity can become a major crisis - especially in the Middle East and Africa, but actually everywhere. Global food chains are expected to be affected, thus further exacerbating already-rising food prices, as Lama Fakh (an executive Middle East and North Africa director at Human Rights Watch) warns.*

**Both Ukraine and Russia happen to be leading exporters of agricultural products to North African and Middle Eastern nations.** These countries are heavily dependent on grains from Kiev, for example, and the price of bread and other basic food items has been escalating. Most of these countries already face internal conflicts and have populations struggling with food insecurity.

For example, approximately 80% of the wheat Lebanon imported in 2020 came from Ukraine. Egypt, in its turn, remains the world’s largest wheat importer, which places this North African country in a very delicate position: about 50 percent of its imports come from the Russian Federation, while another 30 percent come from Ukraine. Libya imports 40% of its wheat from Kiev, and Yemen imports around one third of its wheat from Ukraine, while 8% comes from Russia.

In fact, the potential damage is global. 45% of Ukrainian exports are agricultural-related. It is a leading exporter of poultry, wheat, barley, and corn, and much of its wheat comes precisely from the Eastern Ukrainian areas where most of the heavy conflict is going on.

In fact, the Black Sea area - affected by the current military operations - exports over 12 percent of the food traded globally. Moreover, **Ukraine possesses about one-third of the planet’s most fertile soil**, according to the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). However, on March 9, Kiev banned exports of grains and many other food items in order to prevent a domestic crisis in times of war, thus disrupting supply chains. This is quite

alarming because the planting season is to start this April.

**The Russian Federation itself is the largest wheat supplier worldwide and one of the main producers of fertilizers.** The problem is that it could halt fertilizer exports as a response to the heavy economic sanctions imposed on the country.

In Latin America, for example, Brazil imports 95% of its nitrogen fertilizers, Moscow being its leading supplier (21% of the amount imported by Brazil comes from there). Brazilian harvests have been much damaged by droughts since 2020. In any case, the increase in fuel prices in itself affects food transport costs, thereby affecting agricultural productivity worldwide.

There is a global energy shortage crisis today, which was caused by the supply-demand imbalance after the pandemic and was made worse by the global supply chain crisis, among other factors. Due to a number of climatic and natural reasons, Brazil, India and China have been facing energy problems. The crisis is severe in the Middle East and beyond. [Lebanon too](#) has been struggling with fuel shortages, and so has Syria, and [Turkey](#).

There are [fuel wars](#) going on in the Levant, a situation that has been made worse by US sanctions – the US Caesar Act, in this case. Iran has been shipping fuel to countries such as Lebanon, Syria, and Venezuela, as part of its [oil diplomacy](#), and there have been attacks on vessels (Damascus accuses Israel of being behind them). Western Europe, in its turn, had already been facing its own [energy crisis](#) which was aggravated by the pandemic, and by the delays in the completion of the now-halted [Nord Stream 2 pipeline](#).

With on-going [migration](#) and energy crises, adding food insecurity to this scenario can lead to a catastrophic situation. One could say that by fueling the Ukrainian-Russian conflict and by sanctioning Moscow, the West is in fact [punishing itself](#), but the truth goes beyond that: it is punishing the entire world.

**Solving the current impasse depends on leaders opening channels of communication and dialogue with Moscow.**

Unfortunately, the Western Establishment today does not seem to have political leaders up to this task. Rather than seeking dialogue with the Kremlin, they have been trying to turn Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky into a kind of a Western showman and mouthpiece of North Atlantic Alliance interests.

He was in talks with the the American Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences to make an Oscar appearance – which did not happen – and has been addressing the parliament of a number of NATO countries to make his points (by videoconference). Joe Biden's visit to Poland also only added fuel to the fire. To sum it up, the West is irresponsible in further fomenting tensions by sending more troops to Eastern Europe and failing to pursue good diplomacy. A cease-fire must be negotiated. But then Ukraine and the West must make concessions. Or else there will be hunger worldwide.

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