

Weaponization of grain by the Russian Federation

Adopted at the YEPP Council Meeting in Zagreb (23/09/2023)

Recognizing that:

- Following the unprovoked large-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, Russia started a blockade of Ukrainian ports, which are essential part of global food supply chain, that has triggered significant worldwide nutritional and food security emergencies. The outcome has been a remarkable surge in prices for staples such as grains, sunflower oil, and general food items. Additionally, fertilizer prices have also soared to unprecedented levels;
- The Black Sea Grain Initiative, commonly referred to as the initiative on the safe transportation of grain and foodstuffs from Ukrainian ports, was signed on July 22, 2022, between Ukraine, Turkey, the United Nations and the Russian Federation. This initiative established a set of protocols designed to facilitate the safe export of grains from specific Ukrainian ports. Its primary aims were to help reduce pressure on developing countries that depend on imports and to tackle the food crisis of 2022;
- In late October 2022, the Russian Federation temporarily suspended the initiative that permitted the secure transit of Ukrainian agricultural exports. However, within four days, they chose to reinstate the agreement, following Turkey and the United Nations' persistence in facilitating the shipments, despite the objections raised by the Russian Federation;
- During March 2023, an announcement was made by Turkey and the United Nations indicating the successful attainment of a second extension for the initiative, ensuring its continuation for a minimum of an additional 60 days;
- After declaring unreasonable demands, the Russian Federation decided to leave the initiative on 17th of July 2023;
- One year into the initiative, more than 32 million tonnes of food had been exported from Ukraine to 45 countries around the globe¹, among them 16 million tonnes of corn, 8 million tonnes of wheat, 1 million tonnes of sunflower meal, 1 million tonnes of barley, 1 million tonnes of rapeseed²;
- From 18th to 24th and on 27th of July 2023 and on 2nd, 11th, 14th, 15th of August 2023, the Russian Federation launched a series of missile attacks on Ukrainian Black Sea ports with aim to stop grain shipping;
- On 20th of July 2023 the Russian Federation blew up terminal with grain, which was meant to send to China, it raises concerns, especially in face of possible consequences of floods in China, which already caused enormous damage to crops fields;
- The presence of food insecurity globally, and specifically in the vicinity of the European Union, presents a significant hazard to the security of both the EU itself and its individual Member States.

Acknowledging that:

- Prior to Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the cost of food had already reached its peak over the course of a decade. This escalation was attributed to disrupted supply chains and the occurrence of severe weather events;
- According to the United Nations, within the past two years, the count of individuals grappling with severe food insecurity has twofolded, surging from 135 million prior to the pandemic to 276 million

¹ One year of the Black Sea Initiative: Key facts and figures. URL: <https://news.un.org/en/story/2023/07/1138532>

² Data. Black Sea Grain Initiative. URL: <https://www.un.org/en/black-sea-grain-initiative/data>

at present. This figure is projected to further rise to 323 million due to the implications of the war in Ukraine³;

- The European Union and its Member States possess a well-established history of providing backing to humanitarian aid initiatives aimed at addressing (severe) food insecurity;
- African countries such as Somalia, Djibouti, Ethiopia⁴, Tunisia, Mauritania, Libya, Egypt⁵, are heavily depend on wheat exports from Ukraine;
- In 2022 Ukraine provided 643 189 metric tonnes⁶ of food for the World Food Programme;
- By July 2023 severe droughts in African Horn have already forced 270 000 people⁷ combined from Somalia, Kenya and Ethiopia to become refugees and asylum seekers, any further disrupts in grain export would only worsen the situation;
- International wheat prices increased by 1,6%⁸ in July after the Russian Federation pulled out of grain initiative and started de-facto blockade on Ukraine;
- In July 2023 the food inflation rate in the European Union was on the level of 12,46%⁹;
- The executive director of the World Food Programme Cindy McCain said that Russia's exit from grain initiative is a shock for 345 million people, who are already facing food insecurity¹⁰;
- President Putin's main goal is to cause humanitarian crises, especially in African countries to provoke migration crises in the European Union with intention to help radical groups to enter governments in member countries of the EU.

YEPP calls on:

- The EU and its Member States to advance a forward-looking action strategy in not only this but also other zones grappling with food security and nutrition crises. The goal is to avert future calamities stemming from food insecurity;
- The EU and its Member States should intensify their endeavors to deliver appropriate and ample humanitarian assistance to nations significantly impacted by food insecurity, with a specific focus on African countries;
- The EU and its Member States to put diplomatic pressure on the Russian Federation to return to Black Sea Grain Initiative and stop missile attacks on Ukrainian Black Sea ports;
- The EU and its Member States in cooperation with Ukraine, the Republic of Türkiye and local EU partners to create and implement security mechanism to prevent any cargo ships being captured or raided by the Russian Federation;
- The EU and its Member States to work on promoting special food programs to help insecurity groups within the European Union in order to prevent rise of support of radical groups;

³ United Nations, remarks of UN Secretary-General António Guterres' to the Global Food Security Call to Action ministerial meeting in New York, <https://press.un.org/en/2022/sgsm21285.doc.htm>, 18 May 2022.

⁴ Implications of Ukraine Conflict on Food Access and Availability in the Eastern Africa Region. 04.03.2022 <https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=&ved=2ahUKEwjI8-Tr3NmAAxXIDRAIHZhtB-8QFnoECAYQAQ&url=https%3A%2F%2Fdocs.wfp.org%2Fapi%2Fdocuments%2FWFP-0000137369%2Fdownload%2F&usg=AOvVaw3lX0QmVJopTcF9QI-aPwww&opi=89978449>

⁵ The importance of Ukraine and the Russian Federation for global agricultural markets and the risks associated with the current conflict. 10.06.2022.

https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=&ved=2ahUKEwirzqa03dmAAxXRi8MKHbYtB3MQFnoECCIQAQ&url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.fao.org%2F3%2Fcb9013en%2Fcb9013en.pdf&usg=AOvVaw26NFL2HdLwIx0ZT_FZmUSv&opi=89978449

⁶ World Food Program. Update on food procurement 26 June-30 June 2023.

https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=&ved=2ahUKEwjy45f83NmAAxWAEBAIHfifC6AQFnoECBgQAQ&url=https%3A%2F%2Fexecutiveboard.wfp.org%2Fdocument_download%2FWFP-0000150468&usg=AOvVaw2_66xUIE6flsRGk8VLQhT0&opi=89978449

⁷ Drought in African Horn. Situation Update, July 2023. <https://reliefweb.int/attachments/3a3f12c7-4113-4e2c-9da7-baa6dfed0b64/WFP-0000151188.pdf>

⁸ FAO Food Price Index. 04.08.2023. <https://www.fao.org/worldfoodsituation/foodpricesindex/en/>

⁹ European Union Food Inflation. <https://tradingeconomics.com/european-union/food-inflation>

¹⁰ Russia grain deal exit hurting 345m vulnerable people: WFP chief. 16.08.2023. <https://asia.nikkei.com/Editor-s-Picks/Interview/Russia-grain-deal-exit-hurting-345m-vulnerable-people-WFP-chief>

- The EU and its Member States to join efforts with FAO and WFP¹¹ in a programme which focus on helping smallholder farmers and rural families to clean lands from mines and other explosive remnants of war;
- The EU and its Member States to provide any necessary assistance to Ukrainian government in the process of demining of the war-affected territory of Ukraine liberated after 24th of February 2022.

¹¹ Agencies join forces with deminers to reclaim agriculture land in Ukraine. 23 June 2023
<https://news.un.org/en/story/2023/06/1138017>