

Ukraine considers switching grain export to railroads

Ukraine is looking to establish a grain export route by train through the western border, Ukraine agricultural and food minister, Roman Leshenko, said in a statement. Currently, the Ukrainian government is discussing the abolishment of import duties on Ukraine grain with neighbouring countries so it could be delivered via Moldova to Romania - to the Black Sea ports not affected by the Russian military invasion, he added.



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However, as much as 20 to 25% of the Ukrainian grain has already been lost, Leshenko said, referring to this year's spring sowing campaign, which is delayed primarily at the territory invaded by Russian troops. Bigger problems could be avoided if a ceasefire agreement is signed shortly and farmers are provided with enough fuel and fertilizers, Leshenko added.

At least one port should be opened

On March 9, Ukraine banned exports of grain and other food products to prevent a domestic humanitarian crisis. Even if the existing supply chain disruptions are resolved soon, the problems would most likely persist because farmers are fleeing the conflict is destroying infrastructure and equipment, Human Rights Watch (HRW) said in a statement.

"We need to open at least one port, so that we could export around five million tons of grain per month. In this case, there'll be losses (of grain for the world market), but they won't be critical," Leshenko said. Ukraine has historically exported its grain, vegetable oils and other food products by ship. The country accounts for 11% of global wheat exports and 55% of sunflower oil exports.

"Global food chains demand global solidarity in times of crisis," said Lama Fakih, the executive Middle East and North Africa director at HRW. "Without concerted action to address the supply and affordability of food, the conflict in Ukraine risks deepening the world's food crisis, particularly in the Middle East and North Africa.:

Railway infrastructure is ready

The Ukraine state-owned railway operator also supported the idea of exporting grain by train, saying this would not only save the business but would also prevent the global food crisis. Several international organisations have recently voiced concerns that the Ukraine war could cause famine in some regions of the world.

Ukrainian Railways said it might deliver grain to borders with Romania, Hungary, Slovakia and Poland, from where grain can be delivered to ports and logistical hubs in European countries. Ukraine Railways said it could deliver 150 grain carriages per day to Romania, 45 to Poland, 17 to Hungary and 60 to Slovakia, with up to 70 tons of grain loaded on each carriage.

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