



[The Implications of Ending the Black Sea Grain Deal](#)

Russia announced this past Monday the termination of the year-old agreement that allowed Ukraine to export grain through the Black Sea, despite Moscow's naval blockade. The deal was brokered with help from the United Nations and Turkey in July 2022, with its main intention being to regulate stable global food prices and allocate resources to countries facing food scarcity after Russia's initial naval blockade of Ukrainian ports at the start of the war. With the original deal only in place for 120 days, it has been renewed three times to accommodate global food demands until Russia's recent suspension. Ukraine is a major global exporter of grain and other food sources and fertilizers. Over 32.8 million tons of food have been sent since the deal was established. The food and resources reach as far as Somalia, Ethiopia, and Kenya, all countries that are increasingly vulnerable due to the worst regional drought in decades. Over 20 million people are facing food insecurity as a result. The Horn of Africa relies on exports from Russia and Ukraine to sustain up to 80% of their population's food needs. Russia's suspension of the grain deals puts the sustained global prices for food at risk and their overall accessibility moving forward.

The deal's suspension came hours after an attack on the Kerch Strait Bridge, an essential Crimean military passage for Russian forces. The bridge connects Russia to the Crimean Peninsula and South Ukraine via land, with Vladimir Putin publicly condemning the attack citing the current lack of military utilization and placing blame on Ukraine. There was immediate retaliation, as Russian forces launched missiles on Tuesday toward the Ukrainian city of Odesa, a key export port for grain. The Kremlin later stated that this blast did not correlate with the government's stance towards the grain deal, with their reasoning for withdrawal being an inefficient delivery of food supplies and continued attacks by Ukrainian forces. While sanctions are not placed directly on Russian food products, the Kremlin has cited that these sanctions impede regional production and trade efforts. As Russia cannot purchase agricultural machinery from abroad and remains disenfranchised from the global SWIFT payment network, government officials point to removing these barriers necessary for Russia to resume its participation and allow trade across the Black Sea.

As the global economy continues to grapple with the effects of high inflation and cuts in production due to the COVID-19 Pandemic, the subsequent consequences of Russia's suspension will be felt directly in both food prices and availability. Following the news of the Kremlin's withdrawal, U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken stated that Russia was "weaponizing food" amidst the ongoing war with Ukraine. It will be harder to deliver food to high-demand areas. Coinciding with higher prices, it will simultaneously damage Ukraine's economy as they rely on food exportation as a significant revenue stream. With Ukrainian production already down 35-40% due to the war, the deficit will continue to increase regarding the global food supply.

With over 345 million people facing food insecurity worldwide, the suspension of the grain deal exacerbates an already severe global crisis. Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan went on record after the news broke to reaffirm Turkey's commitment to reinstating and extending the deal, as he noted that Putin also "wants this humanitarian bridge to continue." Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy also spoke to reporters regarding the possibility of exportation across the Black Sea to continue without Russia's facilitation or participation, yet it is still unknown about the plausibility or logistics of this plan. Regardless, the effects of Russia's withdrawal will be felt imminently in both Ukraine and the Horn of Africa as food prices begin to rise and supplies dwindle. As Russia continues to use food as a bargaining chip in the greater scheme of its war with Ukraine, the consequences will be felt on all levels as the global food crisis worsens.