

Russia Sends Free Grain to African Countries in Need, UN/West Cuts Food Aid

by Marcia Merry Baker

July 21—The Kremlin announced July 18 that in the coming fortnight they would be working out specifics with certain African nations for Russia to deliver cost-free grain to countries most in need. This announcement came a day after Russia left the [Black Sea Grain Initiative](#) (BSGI), whose last extension expired July 17. The BSGI is the deal agreed upon July 22, 2022 by the United Nations, Türkiye, Ukraine, and Russia, to set up a safe shipping corridor for Ukraine and Russian food exports, and fertilizer from Russia, for humanitarian purposes.

Russia's grounds for leaving the deal, cited often over the last 12 months, include the obstacles thrown at Russian exports in terms of payments, logistics, insurance, sanctions, and other actions violating the agreement. And secondly, Russia has pointed out repeatedly that Ukraine's food exports were not prioritized for relieving hunger in food import-dependent nations, but remained focused on exporting to their food-sufficient customer nations in Europe and Asia—the commercial partners of the food cartels dominating agriculture in Ukraine.

At a United Nations Security Council meeting July 21, called by the UK to elicit denunciations of Russia for withdrawing from the BSGI and shelling Odessa, Russia's Deputy Ambassador Dmitry Polyansky responded: "What did you expect? The Initiative had ceased to serve its initial purpose, but had become purely commercial." Polyansky named the beneficiaries of the commercial sales boom in Ukrainian grain: Cargill, Dupont, and Monsanto; and the losers, Russian farmers, who had to sell their bumper harvests, effectively, under conditions of sanctions.



UN/Levent Kulu

The BC Vanessa, a bulk carrier chartered by the UN's World Food Program, departed Odessa with 30,000 metric tons of wheat, bound for Türkiye, with Afghanistan as the final destination, Sept. 28, 2022.

'The Poorest Countries Benefited the Least'

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov had told reporters July 18 that at the Russia-Africa Summit, "[Second Summit](#): Russia-Africa Economic and Humanitarian Forum For Peace, Security, and Development," coming up July 27–28 in St. Petersburg, Russian officials will be conferring with African leaders on priorities for delivery of free Russian grain. Participating in the Summit will be delegations from 49 African nations, according to Alexander Polyakov, Deputy Director for Africa at the Russian Foreign Ministry. *TeleSUR* July 18 quoted Peskov as saying,

The poorest countries in Africa have benefitted the least [from the Black Sea Initiative for Ukrainian grain exports.] We are in contact with our African partners, these contacts will continue at the St. Petersburg summit; we are preparing and waiting for them.

Thus, the world is now at a moment of truth for who is, and who is not, doing something about the world food crisis. Russia's President Vladimir Putin

has called this question repeatedly over the course of the Black Sea Grain Initiative, especially at the times when the United Nations pleaded for extensions of the deal, despite the acknowledged fact that the West was not honoring it.

For example, on March 20, Putin [addressed](#) this at the International Parliamentary Conference: Russia–Africa In a Multipolar World:

If we nevertheless decide not to renew this deal after 60 days, Russia will be ready to supply the same amount that was delivered under the deal, from Russia to the African countries in great need, at no expense.

The non-renewal of the deal came this week; Russia is making good on Putin’s offer.

UN Cuts World Food Aid

In stark contrast, in recent months the World Food Program has cut the volume of food aid provided through UN agencies in many locations of dire need, including Afghanistan, Haiti, and elsewhere, as funding donations have dropped drastically.

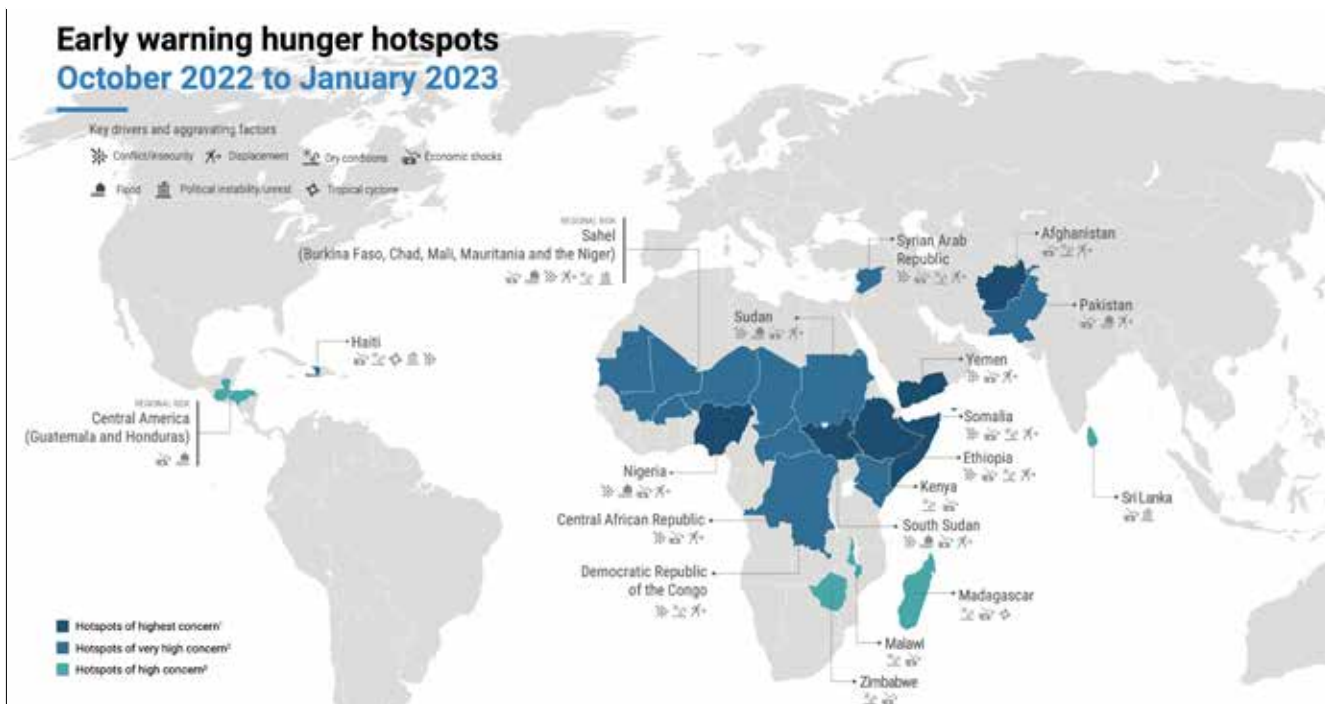
Overall, the number of people worldwide who are lacking reliable food now exceeds two billion, and of those, 900 million (11.3% of people in the world), are experiencing what the U.N. terms “severe food insecurity.” This is an increase of 122 million from 2019 to 2022. The latest world picture is provided in the annual UN multi-agency [report](#) released July 12, “The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2023.” The map shown here (**Figure 1**) is from the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), released in June, showing the extent of food needs, in terms of “hunger hot spots” for the time period October 2022 to January 2023.

A July 17 WFP [press release](#) gives the updates on cuts in food relief, from place to place:

- **Haiti:** The number of people receiving emergency food assistance in July was cut by 25%, from the previous month. As reported in the release:

Tragically, this means 100,000 of the most vulnerable Haitians are forced to get by without any WFP support this month. At the current level of funding for the calendar year, WFP lacks the resources to provide food assistance to a total of 750,000 people who are in urgent need. This is at

FIGURE 1



FAO

Hunger “hotspots,” showing areas of high concern (light blue), very high concern (blue), and of highest concern (dark blue).

a time when the country is facing an unprecedented level of humanitarian needs, with nearly half of the population—4.9 million people—unable to find enough to eat.

- **Afghanistan:** Over May to June, food aid cuts sufficient for emergency relief for 8 million people were made, so the current food aid level is in the range of supplying food to 5–7 million people, down from 13–15 million people per month receiving aid earlier in the year. Overall, an estimated 27 million people in Afghanistan need food aid, out of the 37 million people with not enough to eat. These UN agency food aid cuts directly reflect the “war economy” reorientation in NATO’s member nations. It is the budgets for arms that are being beefed up, while millions go hungry and thousands starve to death.

Look at the drastic cuts in funding for emergency food to Afghanistan. As [summarized](#) by Voice of America, June 20:

The United States, which contributed more than \$1.2 billion to the humanitarian appeal last year, has given \$74 million as of this past June. Similarly, the United Kingdom, another major donor, allocated \$522 million in 2022 but has only contributed around \$30 million thus far in 2023. Germany’s funding has dropped from \$444 million to \$34 million during the same period, according to U.N. figures.

In line with this, the West has conspicuously snubbed an appeal from the Kabul government for wheat seeds and other farm inputs, to aid the farmers who have quit growing opium poppy. The BBC, *Washington Post* and other major media say Afghan farmers must have the “right” to make good money from growing dope. The United States Institute of Peace on June 8 ran an [article](#) June 8 headlined, “The Taliban’s Successful Opium Ban Is Bad for Afghans and the World.”

Food Mobilization Urgent

With an international, collaborative food-production and -distribution mobilization, the crop output needed for temporary food relief volumes sufficient to end hunger everywhere could be met in just two crop cycles, that is, in 24–36 months, according to farm



CC/Meriç Tuna

With an international, collaborative food-production and distribution mobilization, food relief sufficient to end hunger everywhere could be met in just two crop cycles. Here, a wheat crop is being harvested in Türkiye.

leaders fighting the green anti-agriculture measures in the European Union and the United States.

This mobilization for emergency food is best seen as the front edge of increasing annual world grain output to reach the range of some 6 billion metric tons of grains of all kinds, up from its current volume of under 3 bmt. This will require “new” water supplies from infrastructure projects for irrigation, power sources, agro-industrial capacity for farm machinery, high-yield crop genetics, crop defense chemicals, etc.

Instead of this approach, in recent decades, “food relief” operations have become a cynical pretense of concern, perpetrated by the United States and other Western nations, in which their budgets, and a few billionaire donors, would give funds to the WFP and other agencies and charities, which then turned that money over to the commodities cartels (Cargill, Bunge, ADM and lesser-known firms), for the food to distribute as emergency rations, along with cash vouchers.

This has fed a certain number of people—and is vital to save lives, but *as a system*, it is mostly an adjunct to the London/Wall Street policy of preventing nations from developing their own economies and food production. At the same time, with the exception of China, and Russia to an extent, the same London/Wall Street policy has prevented infrastructure construction essential for reliable, high-yield agriculture—water, transportation, power, storage, etc.—even in so-called advanced economies. The awful, imperial green narrative is propagated, that those suffering hunger are a

permanent feature of an overpopulated world; and that infrastructure and agriculture must be cut, to “save the planet.”

WFP Director David Beasley (2017-March 2023) tried to fight this, often saying that he began at the WFP, hoping he would soon be out of a job, by the elimination of world hunger. His replacement, Mrs. Cindy McCain, the widow of the late war-hawk, Sen. John McCain (R-Arizona), is now politely overseeing the cuts in lifesaving relief. She was appointed by President Biden, who moved her to the WFP position, from her being ambassador to UN food agencies in Rome, 2021–2023.

Information Warfare— Food Narratives

This week’s new NATO food narrative is that Russia will be causing increases in hunger, and food price spikes, by wrongfully terminating the Black Sea Grain Initiative. Reality check: The key terms of the Initiative, agreed upon in July 2022, were never fulfilled to support Russian food and fertilizer exports, as well as those from Ukraine.

Russia stated this week that it will re-join the deal, if they are fulfilled. Its Deputy Foreign Minister, Sergei Vershinin, on July 21 referred to Türkiye, through whose offices the Initiative was negotiated a year ago:

We have very close interactions with Türkiye, traditional interactions. We are also in contact with them now and are exchanging [proposals] about what to do in the current situation.

Turkish President Erdogan stressed the same thing, also on July 21, in remarks to the media which were reported by Reuters.

For the record, here are the two prior “NATO food narratives.”

Narrative #1: The outrageous lie that Ukraine

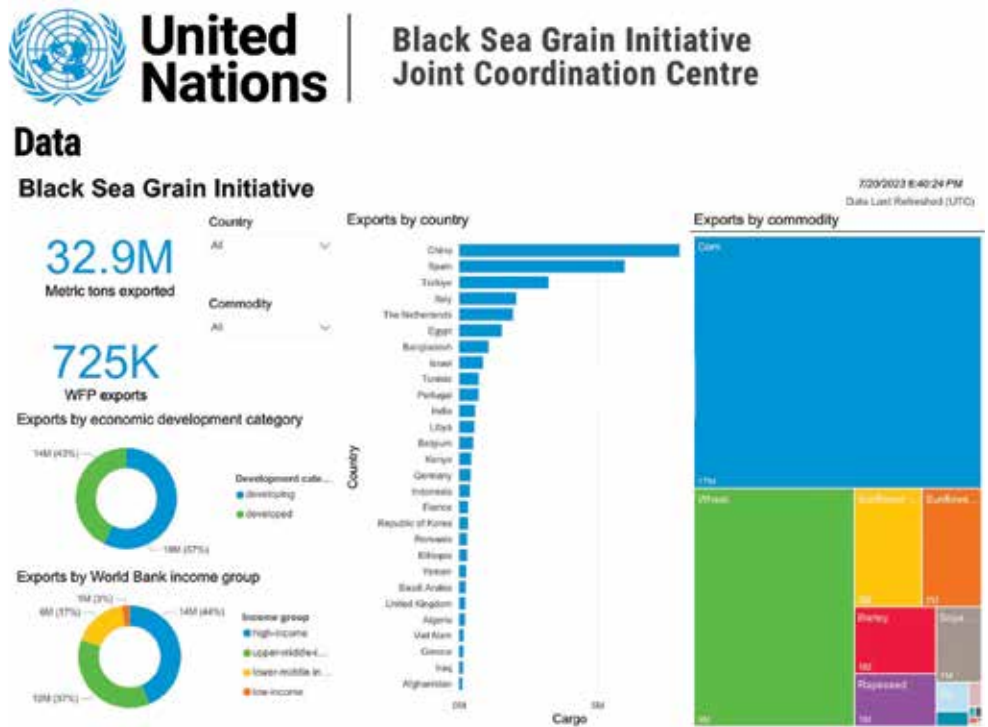
was a major provider of grain to poor countries, and Russia was starving people by its special military operation. Fact check: Ukraine has been, since the 1990s, a major source of grain on the commercial market for developed countries, e.g. Spain, Japan, The Netherlands, China and others—for livestock feed and food needs.

These importers account for over 90% of Ukraine’s exports, and this kind of “world sourcing,” was imposed on Ukraine beginning in the 1990s, by the multinational cartels which came to dominate land use, processing, shipping and export destinations. It was these cartels which Ambassador Polyansky named as having profited from the year-long Black Sea Grain Initiative.

In brief, the breakdown of Ukraine’s exports of 32–33 million metric tons of grain during the period of the Initiative: 32.9 million tons total, of which 40% went to European countries (Germany, the Netherlands, Spain, others), 25% to China; 10% to Türkiye. The very poorest countries got between 2.5% and 3% of the Ukraine grain exports over the period of the Initiative. This is illustrated by an infographic from the Black Sea Grain Initiative Joint Coordination Center (See **Figure 2**).

Narrative #2: Promoted in Fall 2022 to replace the

FIGURE 2



Black Sea Grain Initiative Joint Coordination Center
During the period of the Initiative, 75% of Ukraine’s grain exports went to Europe, China, and Türkiye, while very poor countries got between 2.5% and 3%.

discredited “Ukraine supplies poor countries” version. It states that preventing Ukraine Black Sea food exports raises the prices on the world grain markets, and that is what harms poor, grain-import dependent nations. There is a grain of truth to this, but with a big exception. The West is doing less than nothing to increase grain production where possible, to supply emergency relief, and to put an end to the underlying causes of hunger to begin with.

The relevant figures of global underproduction of food can be seen in the volume of annual output of total grains, listed in order of volume: corn/maize, wheat, rice, barley, sorghum, oats, rye, etc. With over 8 billion people in the world, at the rough metric of half a ton of grain production per person, we should be producing some 4 billion tons a year (for direct consumption, and indirect consumption through the animal protein chain). But the annual global harvest is actually running at below 3 billion tons. Total grains output for the current and past two years is hovering in the same range: 2.799 billion metric tons in 2021/22, 2.745 bmt in 2022/23, and 2.831 bmt projected for 2023/24).

Food for Peace

Wheat is the most internationally traded food grain (commercially or by donation); Russia has the biggest surplus to export, and is the biggest exporter. If supported, its capacity can save multi-millions of lives. In recent years, Russia alone accounted for over 22% of the total volume of wheat traded yearly. In the trade year of 2023–2024, for example, Russian wheat exports may be at least 47.5 million metric tons, or 23% of the expected 212.62 mmt traded by all countries.

Russia’s yearly wheat harvest has grown from 75.16 mmt in 2021/2022, to 92 mmt the next year; and in the current year 2023/2024 it is expected to come in at least at 85 mmt, still high, if not last year’s record. (All statistics from the U.S. Department of Agriculture data series, *World Agriculture Supply and Demand Estimates*, July 12).

Now is the time to put “food for peace” on the world agenda. The Global NATO war deployments, threats and information warfare are a deliberate depopulation policy, whether by deindustrialization and war—to the point of nuclear annihilation—or by starvation.

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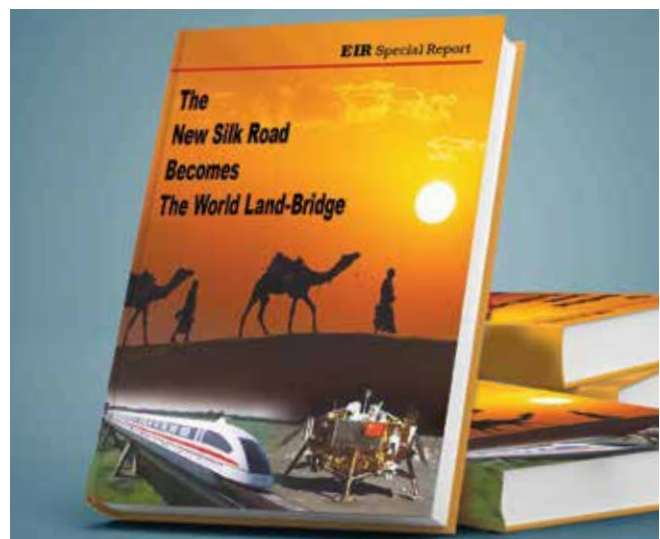
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