

FOOD INSECURITY IN THE CONTEXT OF THE RUSSIA – UKRAINE CONFLICT**Sanchita Chatterjee**

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ABSTRACT

The Russia-Ukraine war has several detrimental socioeconomic effects that are currently being felt internationally and could get worse, especially for global food security. The war is a confrontation between two significant agricultural powers. The food situation will get worse if the war continues, which will be difficult for many nations, especially those that depend on food imports, such as those in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. As a result of supply chain disruptions brought on by the COVID-19 epidemic, high global demand, and subpar harvests in some nations, food prices were already high when the war broke out. This study looks into the direct and collateral effects of the Russia-Ukraine conflict on world food security. The study emphasises how the war had immediate and extensive cascading effects on global food security.

Keywords: Food Insecurity, Russia, Ukraine, Vulnerability

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, food security has received a great deal of attention. However, rather than considering how food security affects social and political violence, scientists and practitioners have typically viewed food security in terms of dietary energy availability and nutrient deficits. The current Russia- Ukraine conflict is exaggerating the issue of food insecurity with disruptions in the supply chains, inflation along with increasing fuel costs. Acute food insecurity can also largely be a result of violent conflict. The so-called “global breadbasket” which is a major supplier of food grains in the North African and Middle Eastern region is now at stake with the advent of this war. By damaging agricultural production, distribution, and markets, impeding economic growth, and raising unemployment rates, conflict can affect food security conditions.

METHODOLOGY

The paper is based on an analysis of the literature review, which includes reports, policy documents, briefs, and working discussion papers by a variety of organisations, including international organisations (for example, FAO, World Bank, World Food Programme (WFP),

International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), International Monetary Fund (IMF), United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), United Nations Development Programme Besides these, latest updates from the war were also gathered to give a clearer picture of the existing scenario.

CONFLICT AND FOOD SECURITY

The universal definition of food security defines food security as "all people at all times have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe, and nutritional food to suit their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life,"(FAO, 1996). The four standard components of food security are availability, access, utilisation and stability(Eriksen, 2007).To be food secure, a person must always have access to enough food with the proper dietary mix or quality food. Chronically food insecure people are those who never get enough healthy food.Several Research studies conclude that wars and conflicts are the main causes of global food insecurity (FAO, 2017).War has multiple negative consequences for individuals. They encompass not only the mortality toll but also the infrastructure of health services and the development of human capital. The world economy was already suffering from the effects of many man-made conflicts, climate shocks, COVID-19, and growing costs when Russia invaded Ukraine, which had disastrous repercussions for the poor in low-income and developing countries. These issues are being exacerbated on a never-before-seen magnitude by the conflict. The supply and reserve of food are highly focused on the global market. Before the war, 30% of the world's wheat and barley came from Russia and Ukraine. 36 nations, including some of the weakest and poorest in the world, depended on them for more than half of their wheat imports (Hussian, 2022).

CONSEQUENCES OF THE RUSSIA-UKRAINE CONFLICT

Russia began a full-scale military invasion of Ukraine in the early hours of February 24, 2022, which resulted in huge civilian casualties and infrastructure destruction(HRW, 2022).The immediate result was seen by imposed sanctions by the United States, Europe, and many other western nations (Canada and Australia), targeting individuals, banks, corporations, significant state-owned companies, as well as exports.The war has severely damaged the markets for commodities, particularly food and energy. According to the United Nations, the impact on international trade, production, and consumption patterns will keep the prices at record high levels until the end of 2024, endangering global food security (OCED, 2022).

Both Russia and Ukraine are two significant participants in the global food and fertiliser industries. Despite having only 2% of the world's GDP, Russia and Ukraine are both referred to as "global breadbaskets" and are significant producers and exporters of essential agricultural products, minerals, fertilizers, and energy, where exportable resources are frequently concentrated in a small number of countries (OCED, 2022).

VULNERABILITY ANALYSIS

With the ongoing conflict, disruptions in harvesting and shipping have caused immediate effects on the changing prices and availability of basic commodities escalating food insecurity (ESCWA/FAO, 2022). With the destruction of ports and railroads, the ability to transport agricultural goods within and outside of its borders became impossible. The conflict immediately impacted grain exports from Ukraine, particularly those of maize, which arrive in the country generally in the spring and early summer. With the increased aggression and damage in the Ukrainian ports of Odesa, Mariupol, and Kherson, 95% of Ukraine's seaborne grain shipments are already hampered (Megan Durisin, P. P. and I. A, 2022). Most Ukrainian exports are no longer possible because all Black Sea ports have been closed. Even if inland transportation infrastructure remained in place, shipping grain by rail would be challenging due to the absence of a functional railway system.

Farmers were already unable to work in their fields due to the war, and the conscription and population shifts made labour scarce. Agricultural activities are anticipated to suffer from disruptions to crucial public services. Reduced access to and availability of essential agricultural inputs, such as fertilisers, exacerbate this issue (FAO, 2022).

While disruptions in production and trade threaten the supply of grains to countries traditionally reliant on imports from Ukraine and Russia, the major risk to food security is coming from the sudden increase in the cost of food and fertiliser worldwide. Global food markets witnessed a significant surge in prices immediately after Russia invaded Ukraine on February 24th, 2022. The well-being of low-income households, which spend the majority of their income on food, will suffer from price increases in food (Glauber and Laborde, 2022). Additionally, the war's severe humanitarian crisis diverts attention and resources away from other vulnerable and

conflict-affected communities in Asia and Africa, exacerbating the food security crisis in these regions.

The Russia-Ukraine crisis' timing is a further complicating element for several reasons. First, the COVID-19 pandemic's effects on the world economy in general and the economies of many vulnerable countries, in particular, had not yet fully recovered. As a result, there aren't enough resources in many import-dependent nations to survive another crisis. Many importing nations are more vulnerable than others and rely on the food produced in Russia and Ukraine. More than 50% of the countries in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) import cereals, with a significant portion of the wheat, maize, and barley coming from Ukraine and Russia. Lebanon gets 80% of its wheat from Ukraine (FAO a, 2022).

Russia has been utilising the fear of a food shortage as a new weapon in its military intervention as the fighting goes on and the stakes rise, and since February 2022, food security has been at the top of the international political agenda. While Eastern African nations receive 72% of their cereals from Russia and 18% from Ukraine, both Russia and Ukraine furnish over 50% of the cereal imports that go to North Africa and the Middle East(FAO, 2022).

CONCLUSION

Understanding the total impact on food security requires an analysis of the long-term and widespread repercussions of conflict-related disruptions in the world's food and fertiliser markets. The ongoing conflict had already observed extensive cascading effects on global food security. Fears of an impending broad worldwide food crisis have been allayed by the international community's response, which included an agreement to unlock shipments from Black Sea ports that were mediated by Turkey and the United Nations. The transition to a wholesome, just, and ecologically sustainable food system must be bolstered rather than abandoned in the context of the Russia-Ukraine war. It is crucial to lessen these vulnerabilities and mitigate them by creating partnerships, policies, technologies and practises that strengthen the resilience of food systems. Additionally, authorities in low- and middle-income countries should refrain from enacting export restrictions or price controls because these actions could exacerbate the increase in commodity prices.

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