Russia's war on Ukraine: Impact on global food security and EU response

SUMMARY

Besides huge human losses and destruction, Russia’s unprovoked invasion of Ukraine – the 'breadbasket of Europe' – has triggered energy and food supply challenges, exacerbating existing food systems vulnerabilities, already weakened under the effect of climate change and the COVID-19 pandemic.

Fears of an unprecedented global food crisis similar to, or even worse than, the 2007-2008 crisis have mounted, magnifying ripple effects for security, migration and political instability. The supply shock provoked by the blockade of Ukrainian exports, coupled with record price levels for energy and basic commodities, led several nations to adopt export restrictions, fuelling market shocks and speculative operations, leading to unpredictability in global food supply.

As the war continues and the stakes become higher, Russia has increasingly been using food shortage fears as a new weapon in its hybrid war, and food security has been at the top of the international political agenda since February 2022.

The response of the international community, including a United Nations–Turkey-brokered agreement to unblock exports from Black Sea ports, has calmed fears of an imminent widespread food global crisis. A number of food import and food aid-dependent countries, however, remain highly vulnerable to food price and foreign exchange volatility.

This publication updates and expands an at a glance' note from April 2022.

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Statue representing a sailor's wife, in Odesa, Ukraine.
The scale of the unfolding global crisis: Factors and state of play

Russia’s military aggression against Ukraine raised widespread international concern of a global food crisis similar to, or worse than, the one the world faced in 2007-2008. Russia and Ukraine are key agricultural players that, combined, export nearly 12% of the food calories traded globally, and are major providers of basic agro-commodities, including wheat, maize and sunflower oil. Russia is also the world’s largest exporter of fertilisers (see Figure 1). Several regions are highly dependent on imports from these two countries to ensure their basic food supply: Russia and Ukraine, combined, supply over 50% of the cereal imports arriving in North Africa and the Middle East, while eastern African countries import 72% of their cereals from Russia and 18% from Ukraine.

Figure 1 – Global exports of basic commodities: Russia’s and Ukraine’s shares (2021)

Over the past eight years, hunger and malnutrition have been rising steadily, reversing several decades of progress. Climate change and the COVID-19 pandemic have further exposed the challenges of the global food system to feed an increasing population in a sustainable manner. According to the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (UN FAO), the number of people affected by hunger globally rose to as many as 828 million in 2021, an increase of about 46 million since 2020 – the highest level since 2014. Three concomitant factors arising from Russia’s military aggression will further negatively affect global food supply:

- A significant reduction of exports and production of essential commodities from the countries at war, mainly from Ukraine;
- A global spike in prices of food supplies and inputs needed for agri-food production (fertilisers and energy);

Data source: UN FAO (March and April 2022); AMIS Market monitor.
Russia’s war on Ukraine: Impact on global food security and EU response

- International responses to the above factors, which can either amplify the effects of the crisis (mainly through uncoordinated protectionist or speculative measures), or mitigate it (applying lessons learnt from the 2007-2008 food crisis).

The scale of the war’s impact on global food supply, and the severity of the subsequent food crisis, will largely depend on the duration of the conflict itself and of the evolution of each of the factors mentioned above, which, although related, can be addressed separately through specific policy interventions, resulting in different scenarios.

At the moment of writing, the situation is very fluid and evolving rapidly.

Disruption of exports and production capabilities in Ukraine and Russia

The supply shock in the agro-commodities market was caused by the severe disruption of grain exports from Ukraine, which were predominantly shipped by sea (95%). The closure of the Azov Sea to commercial vessels, followed by the military blockade of the Black Sea ports, brought Ukrainian exports to an almost total halt between March and mid-August 2022. Initiatives to find alternative land export corridors were instrumental in channelling a part of these goods outside Ukrainian territory and freeing storage capacity for the new harvest, particularly before the blockade was lifted in August 2022 (see: ‘Trade facilitation – EU solidarity lanes’ below). However, the structural logistic challenges are evident, and the total volume of goods exported by land (1.5 to 3 tonnes per month) will never reach the volume shipped by sea (5 million tonnes per month). Transport costs are also much higher. In addition, in March 2022, Ukraine banned export of a number of food products (rye, barley, buckwheat, millet, sugar, salt and meat) until the end of 2022. With regard to production, the UN FAO expects that between 20% and 30% of Ukrainian land usually destined for cereals, maize and sunflower seed cultivation will not produce crops for next year’s harvest. The Ukrainian Prime Minister confirmed that Ukraine’s 2022 grain harvest is expected to be 20% less than in 2021. The allegedly deliberate destruction of infrastructure and agricultural land by the Russian army is increasingly threatening future harvests in Ukraine.

In Russia, although no major disruption to crops already in the ground appears imminent, uncertainty exists over the impact of the war on exports. In mid-March 2022, Russia suspended its exports of wheat, maize and other cereals to Armenia, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. Although EU sanctions imposed on Russia and Belarus do not target agricultural commodities, they do affect fertiliser trade from Belarus (potash). Counter-sanctions from Russia and Belarus may also follow, as happened in 2014. Russia has already banned ammonium nitrate exports and has threatened to impose further fertiliser export bans on ‘un-friendly’ countries (see box ‘Do EU sanctions aggravate the food crisis?’ below). Overall, the European Commission estimates that substitution of up to 25 million tonnes of wheat would be required to meet worldwide food needs in the immediate future.

Food commodities and fertiliser inflation levels

The FAO Food Price Index, tracking monthly changes in international commodity prices, reflects an increasingly difficult situation: it averaged 140.7 points in February 2022, its highest point ever, and 3.1 points above the previous peak in February 2011. In the EU in February 2022, food prices increased 5.6% compared to February 2021. During the same month, sunflower oil and wheat were traded at near-record highs. While sunflower-seed oil is highly substitutable with other vegetable oils, wheat is not, being a staple food for over 35% of the world’s population. This lack of substitutability and dietary diversity will likely compound the pressure on wheat prices. As the markets began to absorb the supply shock, and the international response brought some results, agri-food commodities prices started to decrease steadily in March, and sharply from June to August 2022, reaching levels similar to those prior to Russia’s war on Ukraine. However, consumer
Food price indexes do not yet reflect this decrease, remaining affected by record energy costs and unfavourable foreign exchange rates.

Fertiliser prices have risen nearly 30% since the start of 2022, following last year’s 80% surge, mostly due to higher gas and crude oil prices, a demand surge and export restrictions. Forecasts indicate that this trend will continue.

Disruption of international markets

A number of countries, other than Russia and Ukraine, have already imposed, or announced their intention to impose, some degree of control over the export of essential agricultural commodities. In the first month following Russia’s military aggression, the number of countries imposing food export restrictions climbed from 3 to 16; by June 2022, it was 22.

Argentina and Egypt (the main importers of Ukrainian and Russian wheat), India (the world’s first exporter of rice, and ninth exporter of wheat), Indonesia, Moldova, Serbia and Turkey are imposing export bans on staple crops. In the EU, Hungary announced temporary export controls on wheat, rye, barley, oats, maize, soybeans and sunflowers on 4 March 2022, requiring preliminary registration of intended exports and giving the government a purchase priority for these goods.

Lessons learnt from the 2007-2008 food crisis indicate that protectionist trade restrictions were a significant driver in the near doubling of wheat prices at the time, since they caused further market distortions and exacerbated the crisis. Current export restrictions affect up to 17% of the calories traded globally, a level comparable with the height of the 2007-2008 crisis. On 24 March 2022, G7 leaders announced their determination to ‘avoid export bans and other trade-restrictive measures’, a commitment also endorsed by World Trade Organization (WTO) members in June 2022, but without retaliatory measures. The WTO members also agreed not to apply export restrictions to World Food Programme purchases.

An independent international panel of experts on sustainable food systems, IPES-Food, points out that existing structural food system weaknesses have allowed this crisis to escalate so rapidly:

- dependency on food imports;
- highly specialised production which requires heavy investment, making it hard to switch to more diversified farming systems (‘path dependencies’);
- a speculative grain market; and
- the mutual and compounded consequences of conflict, climate change, poverty and food insecurity.

Expected impact on food security

Impact on EU food security

While food availability is not currently at stake in the EU, food affordability for low-income households may be at risk. Furthermore, the EU’s strategic dependencies on a number of key inputs will affect EU agricultural production. The bloc is largely self-sufficient in key agricultural products, such as wheat and barley (of which the EU is a net exporter), and maize and sugar. The EU is also self-sufficient in a number of animal products: dairy and meat products, fruit and vegetables. However, the EU is a considerable net importer of specific products that may be difficult to substitute in the short term, such as sunflower oil and seafood. Moreover, the crisis has exposed EU dependency on a number of key imported inputs: energy, animal feed and feed additives, as well as on agricultural fertilisers.

The EU vulnerability to market distortions in the fertiliser trade (in terms of both prices and export restrictions) might be particularly acute, since fertilisers represent 18% of the input costs for arable crops. For potassium fertiliser, the EU relies on Belarus and Russia for 59% of its imports, while for
nitrogen fertiliser (where the main determinant is the price of natural gas), 31% of EU imports come from Russia.

In terms of food affordability, inflationary tension will disproportionately affect low-income households, including refugees, putting them at further risk of food insecurity. According to the FAO, a total 6.9 million people in the EU were exposed to severe food insecurity during 2016-2018, based on the food insecurity experience scale (FIES). The pandemic highlighted the vulnerability of groups of EU citizens, with food banks experiencing a sharp increase in demand. It also revealed the dependence of low-income households on social assistance programmes, such as subsidised school lunches, to cover their nutrition needs. In 2020, 8.6% of the overall EU population were unable to afford a meal with meat, fish or a vegetarian equivalent every second day.

Impact on global food security

The FAO estimates the Russian war on Ukraine risks raising the number of undernourished people in 2022-2023 by 7.6 to 13.1 million. According to the UN, the number of severely food insecure people reached 276 million in May 2022. In Ukraine, the UN World Food Programme (WFP) estimates that ‘45 per cent of the population are worried about finding enough to eat’. The conflict also has a serious impact on non-EU countries that rely heavily on basic commodity imports, with strong dependence on supplies originating in Russia and Ukraine. These include: Jordan, Yemen, Israel, Lebanon and a number of vulnerable countries in Africa (such as Eritrea, Somalia, Madagascar, Tanzania and Ethiopia) (see FAO figures, online). Other African and developing countries, less dependent on Russian and Ukrainian cereals, are nevertheless vulnerable to global market disruption – notably the 77 net food-importing developing countries (NFIDCs). Switching to other exporters will incur additional costs for commodities and shipping. Using local products such as plantain, cowpea or cassava to replace imported staples implies a change of eating habits and production patterns, which takes time.

The war on Ukraine also leads to rising prices for local production in third countries, driven by the increased cost of fertiliser, energy, and to a lesser extent, seeds and pesticides. In addition, farmers in the poorest countries might decrease their food production, due to their incapacity to afford fertiliser and other inputs. Higher prices and shortages also seriously affect food assistance to fragile countries.

EU policy responses

Safeguarding food security in the EU

State of play before Russia invaded Ukraine

Food security, defined as access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food for all, has been one of the core objectives of the EU’s common agricultural policy (CAP) since its entry into force in 1962, as enshrined in the Treaties (Article 39 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union – TFEU). The CAP provides income support, market measures and rural development measures, to safeguard farmers and increase agricultural productivity, whilst protecting rural landscapes and the environment. The EU has developed its capacity to ensure a high degree of food security and self-sufficiency over 60 years and successive CAP reforms, now scoring as one of the most food-secure regions in the world, and evolving from a net food importer to becoming the world’s first exporter of agri-food products. The latest reform of the CAP, formally adopted on 2 December 2021 after three years of negotiations, will enter into force in January 2023 and covers CAP interventions until 2027. The reform introduces a new delivery model, moving from compliance towards results and performance, with a new distribution of responsibilities between the EU and the Member States, and with renewed emphasis on environmental performance and sustainability. Member States had to present their national strategic plans, i.e. how they intend to use, manage and monitor CAP instruments and tools to achieve the ambitious CAP objectives to the European Commission by
January 2022. The common fisheries policy (CFP) was launched in 1983, as a structural policy to regulate the market for fisheries products and access to fishing waters, and to modernise EU fishing fleets. It subsequently added the objectives of conservation and management of the fisheries resources in EU waters and in the wider context of international fisheries agreements. While the CAP and CFP regulate primary production, the first stage in ensuring availability of food supply, other policies and instruments have contributed to enhancing other dimensions of EU food security. The General Food Law Regulation, revamped in 2019, lays down general principles, requirements and procedures related to EU decision-making in food and feed safety, and establishes the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) as an independent scientific advisory and monitoring body. The Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived (FEAD) supports EU countries’ actions to provide food and basic material assistance to the most deprived.

On 20 May 2020, the Commission unveiled ‘A farm to fork strategy for a fair, healthy and environmentally friendly food system’, with the ultimate objective of making the EU food system a global model of sustainability at all stages of the value chain. The strategy sets ambitious sustainability targets to reach by 2030, reducing: the use and risk of pesticides by 50%; the use of fertilisers by at least 20%; sales of antimicrobials used for farmed animals and aquaculture by 50%; and placing 25% of agricultural land under organic farming. However, in 2020, the coronavirus crisis sent shockwaves through global food supply chains. The EU food system proved resilient, supported by a host of sectoral, national and EU policy measures. Nevertheless, the disruption shone a spotlight on some structural weaknesses in the EU’s food supply chain, as well as on the affordability of safe and healthy food in the EU itself. Consequently, food security in the EU became a priority, and in November 2021, the Commission presented its communication on ‘a contingency plan for ensuring food supply and food security in times of crisis’, one of the actions envisaged in the ‘farm to fork strategy’ (see box below). Along the same lines, the French Council Presidency (January-June 2022) highlighted sovereignty and food self-sufficiency as one of the main objectives of its programme in the agricultural sector.

EU contingency plan for food supply and food security and the European Food Security Crisis Preparedness and Response Mechanism

Key to improving EU preparedness, this contingency plan embraces a collaborative approach between all public and private parties in the food-supply chain. From the private sector, this includes farmers, fishermen, aquaculture producers, food processors, traders and retailers, as well as transport and logistics sectors. The EU, national and regional authorities will also be central to this plan. The plan itself will be introduced by the European Food Security Crisis Preparedness and Response Mechanism (EFSCM); a permanent platform coordinated by the European Commission that includes Member States’ public authorities and relies on a dedicated group of experts (the EFSCM Expert Group). The EFSCM, which combines representatives and actors from Member States and some non-EU countries, from all stages of the food chain, met for the first time on 9 March 2020, and held a subsequent meeting on 23 March 2020. The group meets periodically, and in the event of a crisis, at very short notice and as frequently as necessary.

The Expert Group focuses on specific activities and a set of actions to be completed between mid-2022 and 2024:

- mapping of vulnerabilities and critical infrastructure of the food-supply chain, including structural issues;
- foresight, risk assessment and monitoring: improving preparedness by making use of available data (including on weather, climate, markets);
- coordination, cooperation and communication: sharing information, best practices, national contingency plans; development of recommendations to address crises; coordination and cooperation with the international community.
New commitments since the beginning of Russia’s war on Ukraine

Russia’s unprovoked invasion of Ukraine has ensured that food security remains firmly at the top of the EU political agenda. The March 2022 Versailles Declaration agreed by the EU leaders urged the European Commission to present options to address the rising food and input prices and enhance global food security in the light of Russia’s war. The Commission swiftly presented a package of measures embedded in the 23 March 2022 communication on ‘Safeguarding food security and reinforcing the resilience of food systems’, including short and medium-term proposals to enhance food security in the EU and in third countries, including in Ukraine itself. The main actions at EU and Member State level (detailed in the boxes below) can be undertaken using existing instruments, without additional legislative changes. In parallel, the Commission announced the postponement of two highly anticipated Green Deal legislative proposals – on the revision of the sustainable use of pesticides directive (SUD), finally submitted in June 2022, and on nature restoration targets in the EU. The Commission also put forward a package of crisis measures to support the EU fishery and aquaculture sectors in the context of Russia’s invasion of Ukraine.

The package of measures announced by the Commission on 23 March 2022 was promptly supported by the European Council at its meeting on 24-25 March 2022, as well as subsequently by the Agriculture and Fisheries Council. The measures have met broad support from a large number of stakeholders and civil society organisations, with the notable exception of most environmental non-governmental organisations. The main subject of discussion is whether pursuing immediate food productivity gains should imply sacrificing the EU’s sustainability ambitions, laid down in the Green Deal and farm to fork initiatives. The Commission position is that sustainability and food security are inextricably linked and therefore can, and should, be pursued simultaneously.

Safeguarding food security and reinforcing the resilience of food systems: EU level

- a €500 million package, including mobilisation of CAP reserve funds, for EU farmers most affected by the crisis, which can be topped up to €1.5 billion through Member States’ national envelopes;
- market safety-net measures to support specific markets (e.g. pigmeat sector) and increased levels of advances of direct payments later in 2022;
- new self-standing temporary crisis framework (TCF) for State aid;
- possibility for Member States to derogate from certain greening obligations in 2022, to bring additional agricultural land into production (use of fallow land under the ecological focus areas);
- preservation of the EU single market, avoiding export restrictions and bans;
- support through the Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived (FEAD) for EU countries’ action to provide food and/or basic material assistance to the most deprived;
- possibility for Member States to apply reduced rates of value added tax and encourage economic operators to contain retail prices.

Main source: COM(2022) 133, 23 March 2022.

In the 2023-2027 CAP, Member States are in the driving seat for the design and implementation of their CAP national strategic plans (NSP), which are agreed with the Commission. In its 23 March 2022 communication, the Commission already announced a higher degree of flexibility in revising the NSPs, with a view to better adapting them to arising needs, and encouraged Member States to use this to enhance overall food system resilience (see box below).
Safeguarding food security and reinforcing the resilience of food systems: Member States

The Commission encourages Member States to:

1. Use the new CAP strategic plans to prioritise investments that reduce dependency on gas and fuel and inputs such as pesticides and fertilisers, through:
   - Investment in sustainable biogas production, reducing dependency on Russian gas.
   - Investment in precision farming, reducing dependency on synthetic and mineral fertiliser, as well as chemical pesticides.
   - Support for carbon farming, reducing greenhouse gas emissions and providing a better income for farmers.
   - Support for agro-ecological practices, reducing dependency on chemical inputs and ensuring lasting food security.

2. Ensure the effectiveness and coverage of social protection systems and access to essential services for those in need.

Main source: COM(2022) 133, 23 March 2022.

Responding to global food insecurity

According to many analyses, the severe impact of the war in Ukraine on global food security again highlights the long-overdue need to reform food systems at large. The EU’s response to global food insecurity mainly takes global food system weaknesses into consideration (see: ‘Impact on global food security’, above), with its long-standing commitment to ensuring access to affordable, safe, sufficient and nutritious food for all, enshrined in the EU policy framework to help developing countries address food security challenges of 2010. The Council conclusions of 31 May 2021, on the EU priorities on food security reiterated this commitment.

The EU efforts to respond to global food insecurity in the aftermath of Russia’s war on Ukraine are consistent with this commitment. Building on the external policy aspects of the 23 March 2022 Commission’ communication, on 20 June 2022, the Council proposed a coordinated EU and Member State action (‘Team Europe response’) in four strands:

- solidarity through emergency relief and a mechanism to keep food affordable;
- boosting food system transformation to develop sustainable production and strengthen resilience;
- trade facilitation for Ukraine’s agricultural goods and for food and fertilisers globally;
- strengthening collaboration within multilateral forums.

Solidarity

Before the war on Ukraine, the EU pledged over €2.5 billion for international cooperation related to nutrition for 2021-2024. The €332 million EU emergency support programme for Ukraine aims at securing Ukraine’s access to basic goods and services and support for its agricultural sector. At the G20 Foreign Ministers’ meeting on 8 July 2022, the EU High Representative/Vice-President of the Commission (HR/VP) Josep Borrell pledged that, 'The EU will mobilise over €7 billion until 2024 for the global food security response'.

The Commission’s communication of 23 March 2022 sets up external policy measures aimed at:

- providing Ukraine with humanitarian assistance, including food aid, and support to its agricultural and fisheries sector, in close cooperation with international partners;
- monitoring and analysing food prices and food insecurity with other global actors;
- supporting third countries to achieve resilient and sustainable agricultural and aquatic food systems;
providing macro-economic support to low-income countries most affected by food price increases; the Commission and Council also pledge to promote the revision of debt reduction or refinancing mechanisms for heavily indebted countries; preventing export restrictions on food commodities.

The EU and its Member States have pledged additional funding to help the most-affected regions face the consequences of Russia’s war on Ukraine on their food security:

- €225 million to the Southern Neighbourhood;
- €1 billion to the Sahel and Lake Chad regions;
- €600 million to the Horn of Africa.

From the European Development Fund (an off-budget fund discontinued since January 2022 but which still has reserves), €600 million will be dedicated to Sub-Saharan African, Caribbean and Pacific countries. This contribution will be broken down between several strands of the EU response:

- humanitarian assistance (€150 million);
- support for investment in sustainable food production and resilient food systems (€350 million);
- €100 million to the International Monetary Fund’s Poverty Reduction and Growth Trust (PGRT), which provides zero-rate loans to low income countries.

Production, resilience and food system transformation

The EU toolbox helps fight malnutrition in third countries, and streamlines humanitarian aid and development programming, as it often combines the direct provision of nutritious products and treatment with support for national nutrition programmes. To improve resilience to food crises, the EU supports smallholder farmers, who run 80% of the farms and 30-40% of the land on average in low and lower-middle-income countries. The EU promotes sustainable agricultural practices and diets adapted to the local circumstances. For example, a partnership to boost the African production of plant-based proteins was announced at the February 2022 EU-African Union Summit. The new Global Gateway investment package on sustainable food systems will support this partnership.

The Commission is helping Ukraine redefine its food security strategy to mitigate the impact of the war, providing support to farmers and for the maintenance of transportation and storage facilities. This could build on existing EU crisis preparedness and adaptation monitoring tools and initiatives, such as the ‘development smart innovation through research in agriculture’ (DeSIRA) initiative.

The EU and its Member States have also initiated or support international initiatives to tackle the food security impacts of Russia’s war against Ukraine (see ‘Multilateralism’ below).

Trade facilitation – EU solidarity lanes

In the context of Russia’s war on Ukraine, the President of the European Commission called for global food exports to continue, while the EU has undertaken measures to facilitate the transit of goods between Ukraine and the EU. This includes the suspension of EU duties on all Ukrainian exports. In April 2022, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) raised its trade facilitation measures for Ukraine by €100 million (up to €330 million in 2022), partly dedicated to trade in food.

To help Ukraine bypass the blockade of Ukrainian seaports by the Russian army and other supply chain disruption, the European Commission launched the EU ‘solidarity lanes’ initiative on 12 May 2022, facilitating the export of Ukrainian agricultural products to third countries through EU land routes and sea ports, and urging EU Member States and stakeholders to:

- prioritise and speed up transhipments (needed because of the difference in rail gauges) of Ukrainian exports at borders by providing more timeslots and additional wagons and lorries;
- treat Ukrainian goods in transit flexibly in customs operations;
- provide temporary storage capacity for Ukrainian exports to third countries.
The European Council meeting of 30-31 May 2022 invited Member States to participate actively in the creation of these solidarity lanes. The Commission set up mechanisms to match EU Member States’ offers of vehicles and storage with the needs. The EU also negotiated to ease cross-border road freight transport with Ukraine and Moldova. The solidarity lanes should help Ukrainian grain reach the countries most in need and liberate much-needed storage space for the next harvest. More than 10 million tonnes of grain and other products have left Ukraine since the launch of the initiative.

The EU welcomed the 22 July 2022 UN–Turkey-brokered Black Sea grain initiative, facilitating safe navigation from Black Sea ports of export vessels containing grain, related foodstuffs and fertilisers. The EU sees the agreement on this initiative as a key element to further normalise markets and deflate global food crisis fears. As of 14 September 2022, 136 vessels had left Ukrainian ports transporting 3 million tonnes of grains and foodstuffs, 27% of which was sent to low and lower-middle income countries. Although pre-war export volumes (over 4 million tonnes of grain) have not yet been reached, both initiatives have the capacity to expand export volumes.

Do EU sanctions aggravate the food crisis?

Russian authorities contend that Ukraine’s refusal to clear mines from its ports and Western sanctions are aggravating the food crisis, rather than the blockades imposed and destructions perpetrated by Russia in Ukraine. The UN, EU and US authorities repeatedly point out that sanctions do not concern Russian food and fertiliser, a fact allegedly acknowledged by Russia’s union of grain exporters. Russia instead therefore blames the disconnection of Russian banks from the SWIFT international payment messaging system, a move that would make it difficult to pay for Russian food products. African Union chair Macky Sall has also expressed this same argument. However, alternative cross-border payment systems exist.

The EU sanctions apply only within the EU and Member States’ jurisdiction and do not prevent EU Member States from allowing Russian food and fertiliser carriers access to their territory. However, shipping companies and insurers may decide to avoid any shipments from Russia, including of food and fertiliser for fear of not abiding strictly by the sanction regime. Other side effects include the decline of remittance flows from Russia, and turning Russian and third countries’ opinion against the EU’s endeavours. This has led some analysts to call for sanctions to be eased, and the EU to reach out to third countries to assess the actual difficulties they encounter due to EU sanctions against Russia.

Multilateralism

EU action to tackle food insecurity has long been based on multilateral cooperation and market transparency. The European Commission recently announced its participation in eight global coalitions on food security and nutrition – which gather a variety of stakeholders – with a view to transforming global food systems and promoting its farm to fork strategy. In addition, the EU is a proactive member of the Agricultural Market Information System (AMIS), an inter-agency platform to enhance food market transparency and policy response for food security, launched in 2011 by the G20 Ministers of Agriculture following the global food price hikes in 2007-2008 and 2010.

Since the outset of the war, the EU has condemned the ‘flagrant violations by Russia of the United Nations Charter, international law and human rights.’ The European Council again called for a coordinated global food security response in May 2022. To this end, the EU has undertaken or participated in several multilateral initiatives on food security.

The Food and Agriculture Resilience Mission (FARM) was launched on 24 March 2022, by the French Presidency of the Council. In coordination with G7 countries and the African Union, FARM aims at monitoring trade on agricultural markets, supporting Ukraine’s and the most-affected countries’ agricultural capacity, and addressing the impact of expected declining production levels on the most fragile countries.

The EU also supports the UN Global Crisis Response Group (GCRG), a diplomatic effort to propose areas for action to all UN countries and to the private sector, civil society and philanthropists. The
UN Secretary General, António Gutteres, chairs the CGRG, with the involvement of six heads of state or government, including two from the EU: the Prime Minister of Denmark, Mette Frederiksen, and the Chancellor of Germany, Olaf Scholz.

The G7 development ministers' meeting in Berlin on 18-19 May 2022 launched the Global Alliance for Food Security (GAFS), to which the G7 Summit at Schloss Elmau (Germany), on 26-28 June 2022, pledged additional funding. The GAFS will ensure the coordination of the World Bank, G7 countries, EU and other stakeholders' aid measures and longer-term policies to address the impact of the war on global food security.

The commitment to concerted action was reaffirmed during the Leaders' Summit on Global Food Security (promoted by the EU, the African Union, Germany, Spain, Colombia, Indonesia, Nigeria and the United States) on 20 September 2022, held alongside the UN General Assembly. The EU and all its Member States have endorsed the Roadmap for Global Food Security – Call to Action and pledge with other UN member states to make new financial and in-kind donations, and to refrain from restrictive market measures. The call to action also commits to short-term measures, such as increasing fertiliser production, and longer-term initiatives to build 'sustainable and resilient agricultural sectors and food systems'.

Position of the European Parliament

In numerous resolutions, the European Parliament has expressed its concern about tackling food insecurity in third countries, notably in the framework of its cooperation with Africa. This particularly implies supporting the provision of basic services, including food security, with the involvement of local communities. In its resolution on the farm to fork strategy, the Parliament highlighted the need for food systems able to provide enough affordable and safe food for all. The Parliament stressed that 'rapid population growth, climate change, the scarcity of natural resources and changing consumption patterns' further challenge the achievement of the 'Zero hunger' UN Sustainable Development Goal (SDG 2). In its opinion report for the resolution, Parliament’s Committee on Development (DEVE) called for comprehensive implementation of the farm to fork strategy, taking the needs of the most deprived into account, notably in conflict-affected areas.

On 24 March 2022, the European Parliament adopted a resolution calling for an ‘urgent EU action plan to ensure food security inside and outside the EU in light of the Russian invasion of Ukraine’. A large number of Parliament’s proposals to support EU farmers and consumers are in line with the Commission’s 23 March 2022 communication on safeguarding food security. The Parliament has called on the Commission to consider additional measures, such as extending the extraordinary COVID-19 rural development measures to address farmers' liquidity problems, a proposal supported by 12 EU Member States in the Council. It emphasises that European strategic autonomy in food, feed and the agricultural sector must be reinforced, in line with the Green Deal objectives. It notes, however, that the objectives set out in the farm to fork and biodiversity strategies must be analysed on the basis of a comprehensive impact assessment of EU food security and the situation in neighbouring countries, maintaining that no food shortages arise as first priority. The Parliament also warns against speculative behaviours on the food market. The Parliament calls for safe food corridors to and from Ukraine to deliver aid and goods, as well as for direct and urgent support for Ukraine with seeds, fuel, fertilisers to maintain its agricultural production. It also proposes that the EU budget’s emergency aid reserves are used to increase support to the World Food Programme.

Stressing that the right to food is a human right, in its resolution of 6 July 2022 on addressing food security in developing countries, the European Parliament ‘urges the EU to prioritise food security, biodiversity protection, and sustainable agriculture in its international development programming with partner countries’. It expresses Parliament’s concern about developing countries’ dependence on food imports, notably products from Ukraine and Russia, but also ‘subsidised EU products’. The resolution highlights the urgent need to help developing countries achieve ‘food sovereignty’. This includes supporting the maintenance of local plant genetic resources and the research on, and
implementation of, local diets and nutrition targets, with the close participation of local stakeholders, especially smallholder farmers.

ENDNOTES


2 The agreement underpinning the Black Sea grain initiative does not specify the destination of the exports, since food exports remain in the hands of commercial operations. It nevertheless allowed the WFP to ship grain from Ukraine for the first time since the beginning of the war. In addition, releasing the grain, by itself, has contributed to settle markets and decrease global prices, and to liberate storage space for the next harvest.

3 Naval cooperation to escort grain shipments from Ukraine was envisaged and the EU allegedly considered setting up a naval mission with a UN mandate on the model of the EUNAVFOR Somalia – operation Atalanta, which protects World Food Programme vessels delivering food aid to the Horn of Africa. However, this protection is against sea pirates, not a large national army. See: T. Lațiçi, E. Pichon, B. Stanicek, *Charting a course through stormy waters: the EU as a maritime security actor*, EPRS, European Parliament, 2021.

4 The Food Security Information Network (FSIN), funded by the EU and the United States Agency for International Development, and the Global Network Against Food Crises (GNFC), launched by the EU, the FAO and the World Food Programme (WFP) in 2016, also foster international research on food and inform research-based food policies. The EU also supports CGIAR, an international research network in sustainable food systems and the fight against hunger.

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