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Ukraine, Conflict

Ukraine: Protect the Breadbasket of the World

“If we don’t end war, war will end us,” said H. G. Wells, English writer. Around 977 civilians in Ukraine have been killed because of Russia (“Ukraine Civilian War Casualties”). These casualties started on February 24, 2022, when Russia began its invasion of Ukraine. The conflict between Ukraine and Russia has been building since 2014 when the Crimean Peninsula was taken by Russia. This conflict has been causing many food security issues in Ukraine and the rest of the world.

Ukraine is located in the Eastern part of Europe and is bordered by many countries including Russia. Ukraine has a population of 43,287,797 (“Ukraine Population”). Sixty-nine percent of the population is urban, and thirty-one percent is rural (“Ukraine Population”). Ukraine’s government is a unitary republic under a semi-presidential system (Misachi). Around seventy-one percent of the land in Ukraine is used for agriculture (“Ukraine-Agricultural Land”). They mainly grow wheat and corn (Maciejewska and Skrzypek). The average size of a farm in Ukraine is around 1,000 hectares or 2,471 acres (Wesolowsky). Ukraine’s climate is very good for growing corn and wheat which is why they grow so much of it.

A typical family varies in size, but the average is 2.58 people per household (“Average Size of Households in Ukraine”). Families in Ukraine usually live in apartments if they live in the city or individual houses. A typical family’s diet is vegetables, bread, dairy products, and starchy foods (“Ukraine”). The most popular dishes are made of cereal grains and flour pastes (“Ukraine”). Most families get their food from local farmers’ markets because most of the food is grown by small farmers who sell their food at those markets (“Eating in Ukraine. A Brief Tourist Food Guide to Ukraine.”). The average wage in Ukraine as of 2018, is 275,000 UAH or \$10,102 annually (“The Average Salary in Ukraine”). Families do have access to education. The fee for children’s education is based on the income of the parents (“Ukraine - Preprimary Primary Education”). Children from ages seven to fifteen years old attend nine-year compulsory school (“EDUCATION SYSTEM IN UKRAINE”). After that, they have a three year upper secondary school leading to an exam to see if they will continue their schooling at an even higher level (“EDUCATION SYSTEM IN UKRAINE”). They are, in theory, guaranteed free healthcare but they often have to pay expenses out of pocket. Before the war with Russia began, Ukrainian families had access to clean water, electricity, toilets, and local markets, but now, because Russia has destroyed many homes and buildings, they don’t all have those necessities. Many families have had to flee the country, and many others are trying to leave.

Thirty percent of the world's traded wheat is produced by Ukraine and Russia collectively (Bourne). The war between Russia and Ukraine has shut down all grain exports from both countries (Bourne). This has caused a huge issue on a global scale. The World Food Program is planning to feed 140 million people this year (Bourne). About three million of those are displaced Ukrainians (Bourne). Many nations depend on Ukraine for their main food source, and those people make up forty-four million people that the WFP is planning to feed (Bourne). Some of these countries include Yemen, Afghanistan, Syria, Ethiopia, and many other countries in the Middle East and Africa (Bourne).

This conflict is not only affecting the present, but it will also affect the future. Ukrainian farms are going to miss their planting and harvesting seasons (Nicas). This is because Russia has been invading and destroying Ukraine. Farmers cannot plant their crops because it is not safe to be outside or even in Ukraine at all. This will affect the future of food production immensely because one of the biggest sources of food in the world is about to not grow any crops this season. Food prices will rise at a quick pace because almost a third of the wheat in the world is not being grown or harvested. Not only are there crops that won't be planted, but there are crops that are harvested stuck in Ukraine because of the war and sanctions (Nicas).

This conflict is affecting the Ukrainian people in a huge way. Outside of Kherson, Ukraine, a Ukrainian dairy farmer is trapped on his farm (McCullough). The farmer's name is Andrii Pastushenko (McCullough). Russian soldiers already took control of Kherson, and Pastushenko could see the smoke from his farm (McCullough). Russian soldiers eventually showed up to his farm on March 14 and took over a farm office, two cars, food, and supplies (McCullough). "The Russian soldiers arrived on my farm yesterday," Pastushenko said. "Ten of them are here during the day but more arrive at night. They took two cars from my guards and some food. My Ukrainian army knows they are here"(McCullough). Pastushenko is killing his own cows so that his staff and local villagers have something to eat (McCullough). He says that he must keep the farm going with his fifteen year old son and his staff (McCullough). There are many people in Ukraine that are in the same situation as Pastushenko.

The fertilizer trade is a bigger threat to the food system than the shortage of wheat. "The biggest threat the food system is facing is the disruption of the fertilizer trade," says David Laborde, a senior analyst at the International Food Policy Research Institute in Washington, D.C. "Wheat will impact a few countries. The fertilizer issue can impact every farmer everywhere in the world, and cause declines in the production of all food, not just wheat," says Laborde. The fertilizer trade was already disrupted before Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Hurricane Ida destroyed two fertilizer plants along the coast of the Gulf of Mexico in the U.S. last year (Bourne). Many European fertilizer plants have had to slow down production because the price of natural gas has gone up a large amount (Bourne). Russia has banned exports of fertilizer as well (Bourne). To make things even worse, China is anticipating its worst wheat crop in history (Bourne). The combination of all these things have caused a huge disruption in the fertilizer trade.

There are a couple of solutions to face the world food shortage caused by the conflict in Ukraine. The first solution that would be beneficial to Ukraine is support. Many countries have already begun to support Ukraine. A few of these countries are Belgium, Canada, Czech Republic, France, Germany, Greece, Portugal, Romania, Spain, Sweden, Netherlands, UK, and the US. Germany and France both went to Moscow to try to defuse the situation, but that did not work (Goshwami). The United States and Canada have halted the approval of the Nord Stream 2 pipeline after Russia began to invade Ukraine (Goshwami). These countries have been doing a great job helping in any way possible. As Americans, we need to convince our government to do more for Ukraine. Some people may say that the U.S. has its own problems to fix, but we can't fix our own problems if we don't have food or other essential things that Ukraine provides. The only way that our country can improve is to help Ukraine. If we don't, we may not have food to put on the table. We also need other countries to join and support Ukraine through this terrible situation. If other countries do start supporting Ukraine, we can stop the war and get the Ukrainians back home so that they can continue their normal lives again. One bad thing about this solution is that some countries could potentially attack Russia and another World War would break out. As long as these countries stand up with Ukraine we can end the war and get food production back to normal.

Another solution to this problem is for other countries to become more independent. Ukraine can't grow anything right now, so other countries need to step up and cover for what is being lost. Any country that has any extra space should start growing crops and food so that we can cover for Ukraine while they are at war. This will also help Ukraine because then the other countries that are growing extra food can give some to Ukraine so that they can have food to eat. Other countries need to start becoming energy independent. Russia is the world's biggest exporter of oil to global markets, exporting about 2.85 million barrels per day (Elbein). European nations are collectively the largest buyer of Russian oil (Elbein). These European countries need to find other ways to make energy so that we are not giving Russia more money. If these nations keep buying at the rate they are buying, the war will never end. Russia will keep getting more and more money and they will use that to support their military. If their military keeps getting money they will start taking over more than just Ukraine. The nations that are dependent on Russia and Ukraine need to be more independent or else we will never see an end to this conflict.

A third solution is to donate to helpful organizations. There are tons of organizations out there that are doing all they can to help Ukraine. Many of these organizations are set up at the border to help the Ukrainians when they cross the border. If enough people donate money to these organizations we can get the Ukrainians safe. This will not end the conflict but it will prevent innocent people from getting hurt. Many people have already been very generous and helped out these organizations like the Ukrainian Red Cross, the International Medical Corps, CARE, Nova Ukraine, UNICEF, United Nations World Food Programme, and many others. These organizations are doing everything they can to help stop this war. We should help them so that we can stop this war together.

Another solution is for other countries to send in their military. This would help Ukraine to fend off the Russians and get their country back. If the U.S. could send some troops that would help immensely. The U.S. has other problems too, but we need to help end this one before we can fix our own. Other countries could send troops as well so that we can end this conflict. One downside to this solution is that if more countries get involved from a military standpoint then Russia's allies will send troops as well. If other countries do send troops, they need to make sure that a bigger war doesn't break out. The extra troops can help drive out all the Russians back to Russia so that Ukraine has their land again.

The World Food Programme (WFP) is doing all they can to support many of the countries that are on the edge of famine because of this conflict. Recently, on August 16, the World Food Programme sent a bulk carrier full of wheat from a Ukrainian port to the Horn of Africa ("Bulk Carrier Sets off from Ukraine with Grain for WFP in First since Start of War"). This is a major step in the process of getting back to normal, as it was the first ship to set sail from a Ukrainian port since the beginning of this conflict back in February. Now that we are sending wheat out of Ukraine again, it means that other countries will finally have food to eat. It also means that Ukraine is finally getting back into their old habits of exporting wheat again. A way that we can help the WFP to do even more for Ukraine and other struggling countries is to donate. On the WFP website, there is an option to donate. Fifteen dollars can give a one month supply of food to a hungry child. If every American could spare fifteen dollars, 329.5 million children would have a month's supply of food. This would help Ukraine ease back into their daunting task of feeding the world with their farms. Ukraine once was the breadbasket of the world, and they are becoming it again.

Another organization that is doing great things for Ukraine is Nova Ukraine. Nova Ukraine is a nonprofit organization that is dedicated to providing humanitarian aid to the people of Ukraine. They have helped evacuate over 81,000 people and animals from Ukraine during the conflict ("Nova Ukraine"). They also

have over 3,500 volunteers in Ukraine and have helped over two million people (“Nova Ukraine”). Over seven thousand tons of aid have been delivered and around two million meals have been served by Nova Ukraine (“Nova Ukraine”). The only way that they have been able to do all of these incredible things is because of the generosity of people in countries all over the world. That is just what this organization is doing. There are many other organizations that are out there doing all they can to help end this war and restore Ukraine to what it once was.

To update on the status of the exports from Ukraine, over twenty-six million metric tons of corn were sent out of the port of Odessa sometime in mid-August (Reiley). Over eighteen million tons of grains have been stuck in Ukraine since the Russian invasion in February (Reiley). They started exporting again due to the 120-day deal negotiated by Turkey and the United Nations to transport the trapped grains from behind a Russian naval blockade. Since this deal was made, there have been sixteen more full ships that are set to leave the port at any time (Reiley). Michael Swanson, Wells Fargo’s chief agricultural economist, said, “Much of the grain that will be shipped out of Odessa in this “catch-up” effort will be corn for animal feed. This will take a while to be felt” (Reiley). Even though this huge step may not be felt right away, it still marks a huge step in rebuilding one of the world’s biggest wheat suppliers. There could be risks to shipping these carriers out, as the waters are filled with mines and the ships have to be escorted in and out. If the ships can get out safely, the supply chains will be helped immensely as the availability of wheat will go up a great amount.

Going back to the solution of foreign aid, the best forms of foreign aid that Ukraine needs at this time are money and supplies. The conflict has been winding down a bit since the summer, so Ukraine doesn’t necessarily need much military support at this time. They could still use supplies like blankets, appliances, diapers, clothes, shampoo, toothpaste, toothbrushes, and other necessities. Many countries have been donating money and supplies to this cause, but more can help out. Some countries may not want to give money or supplies because they have other issues that they need to fix, but if we don’t fix the problem at hand, countries will never be able to fix their own problems. Foreign aid is very important in solving this conflict because if no countries help out, Ukraine will be destroyed and the world’s wheat supply will be too.

The solution of countries becoming more independent is an important one. To implement this solution, the governments of the countries should create temporary orders to use as much open land as possible for farm land. For example, if the U.S. government makes an order to use as much open land as possible for farming land, people will have to start planting more crops and covering the void in which this conflict is leaving. Some people may not want to do more work and plant more crops, but they need to know that what they are doing is going to help so many lives that don’t have food to put on the table. If enough governments can require that the unused land be used for farming, then we might have a chance at covering for some of the lost food. This can also be the case for the natural resources side of things. If countries can start becoming more energy independent, Russia will have no one to sell their oil to. Also, if the governments can make orders to extract more oil, that will help take away Russia’s biggest donor. Some countries may not have any way to get oil, depending on where they are geographically. If the countries that do have large oil reserves export their oil to other countries that usually get their oil from Russia, then Russia will not make any money off of their oil. If a few countries could implement this, the process of getting the country of Ukraine back to normal will go even quicker. Many countries have been doing a great job of supporting Ukraine in this awful situation, and if even more do, this conflict will come to an end.

This conflict is devastating to global food security. Other countries need to help Ukraine with whatever they can. Ukraine is one of the biggest wheat producers in the world, so we need to make sure that they can get back into their country and go back to their everyday lives. This won't happen unless other countries support Ukraine. So many countries have been helping out by giving Ukraine money and supplies, but to make an even bigger impact, more countries need to join in. Ukraine needs help to end this war and we can all play a part in helping them win and keeping the world food source secure.

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