

Grain Harvest Down 38% This Year

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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ST. PETERSBURG — Russia has enough grain to cover its needs after harvesting 38 percent less in 2010, a senior official said Monday, but his data indicated that the former exporter is likely to import millions of metric tons.

Russia, which had been the world's third-largest wheat exporter, was hit by a severe drought in many producing regions that destroyed large parts of its crop and raised the issue of imports.

Analysts have estimated its imports at 1.5 million to 2 million tons, while a report in Vedomosti said the country could import at least 5 million tons. An Agriculture Ministry spokesman has denied the report.

Deputy Agriculture Minister Alexander Petrikov said Russia had harvested 40.3 million tons of grain by bunker weight by Aug. 19.

He said grains had been harvested from 19.3 million hectares, or 48 percent of the sown area.

Average yields fell to 2.08 tons per hectare from 2.69 tons per hectare on Aug. 19, 2009.

Bunker weight is normally 7 percent to 8 percent higher than clean weight obtained after grain is cleaned and dried. But the difference may be lower in hot and dry years like this one.

Final crop outcome is calculated by clean weight.

Petrikov said Russia had sufficient grain to cover its needs. "I must say that Russia's domestic needs are 77 million tons," he said. "With stocks of some 23 million tons and intervention stocks of 9.5 million tons, this will more than cover domestic needs."

Petrikov confirmed the ministry's 2010 crop forecast of 65 million to 67 million tons by an optimistic scenario and 60 million tons by a pessimistic one.

The country's carry-over stocks, however, which had been previously estimated by the State Statistics Service at 21.7 million tons and by the Agriculture Ministry at 24 million tons as of July 1, already include the 9.5 million tons of intervention stocks.

With a crop of 60 million tons, carry-over stocks of 23 million and consumption of 77 million tons, as well as 3.6 million tons already exported, according to IKAR analysts, Russia will be left with carry-over stocks of just 2.4 million tons by the end of the current crop year on June 30, 2011.

Taking into account the need to allocate some 11 million to 12 million tons for winter sowing due to start in August, Russia appears unable to do without imports.

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