

Russia Faces an 'Acute' Grain Shortage

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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Agrostoi farm director Sergei Solovyov inspecting wheat in one of his fields in the Altai republic on Wednesday. **Andrei Kasprishin**

Russia faces an “acute” grain shortage after the country’s worst drought in at least 50 years and may import more than 6 million metric tons of cereals, SovEcon said Thursday.

The country will have a grain surplus of 4 million tons at most when the next marketing year starts on July 1, 2011, after domestic usage of 77 million tons, the researcher said on its web site. Russian grain supply in the current year will be between 77 million and 81 million tons, it said, calling the Agriculture Ministry’s 90 million-ton estimate “erroneous.”

“There will be a most acute shortage in the market,” SovEcon said. “The country won’t last until the new crop with 4 million tons of inventories.”

Inbound shipments of grain may exceed 6 million tons if the state delays sales from its 9.5 million-ton inventory, the researcher said. The government has said it will start selling stockpiled grain in the first quarter and that cereal supply will suffice to meet domestic

demand.

Grain supply includes stockpiles and imports as well as the national harvest. SovEcon forecasts a 59.5 million-ton grain crop this year. The harvest will come to about 60.2 million tons, according to Bloomberg calculations based on Agriculture Ministry data. The ministry estimates the crop at between 60 million and 65 million tons, compared with 97.1 million tons last year.

Russia exported 3.3 million metric tons of wheat between the start of the marketing year July 1 and Aug. 15, when the ban on exports came into effect, SovEcon said.

Egypt and Turkey bought almost 2 million tons of Russian wheat, the Moscow-based research center said.

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