

Forecast for Harvest Up by 5M Tons

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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The forecast for the domestic grain harvest grew again Thursday as First Deputy Prime Minister Viktor Zubkov said it could reach 90 million tons this year.

Prime Minister Vladimir Putin last month predicted the grain crop at 85 million tons.

The latest expectations are still lower than the 97.1 million tons that farmers harvested in 2009.

A severe drought decimated much of the crop last year, reducing the harvest to 60.9 million tons of grain and prompting an export ban that ended only on July 1.

Grain exports have been 770,000 tons over just the 13 days since that date, Zubkov said. Buyers represented 27 countries, including the traditional partners Egypt, Turkey and Israel as well as new European markets, Zubkov said.

Wheat prices in Chicago, a global benchmark, have declined 13 percent since May 28 when

the government announced that it would lift the export ban.

Perhaps that was at least part of the reason why Zubkov said local grain prices were "comfortable" for both grain producers and their customers.

There are no grounds for any new export restrictions, he said.

Novorossiisk Commercial Sea Port said Thursday that the amount of grain it handled fell 4.4 million tons in the first half of this year because of the export ban.

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