

Officials Fired Over Turkmen Harvest

By [The Moscow Times](#)

July 08, 2012



The Museum of Wheat outside Ashgabat celebrates Turkmen agriculture.

ASHGABAT, Turkmenistan — Turkmen President Gurbanguly Berdymukhammedov has fired his agriculture minister and a large number of farming officials after the former Soviet country failed to meet its wheat output target, sending bread prices sharply higher.

Berdymukhammedov, who enjoys a rising personality cult in the Central Asian nation of 5.5 million, sacked Agriculture Minister Merdan Bairamov “for grave dereliction of his duties” during a government meeting late Friday, official media outlets reported Saturday.

A large number of lower-ranking local agriculture officials have also been sacked nationwide.

Turkmenistan, the most arid of the 15 former Soviet republics, with most of its territory lying in the Kara Kum desert, had originally planned to harvest 1.6 million tons of wheat this year after falling short of a similar target in 2011.

The country’s actual wheat crop totaled 1.3 million tons in 2011, down 7 percent from 1.4

million in 2010, when it became a wheat exporter for the first time.

Local state-controlled media reported that with this year's crop nearing completion, the nation has to date harvested just slightly over 1 million tons of wheat.

Turkmenistan's High Control Chamber, which reviews the work of various ministries, said that much of this year's harvest had not been properly stored and was just "lying under the sky."

News of a bad crop coincided with a threefold rise in bread prices in local shops Friday. The state, which regulates the price of the staple, has not made any comment on the increase.

In the capital, Ashgabat, a loaf of bread jumped to about 21 cents, the same as a liter of gasoline.

Original url:

<https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2012/07/08/officials-fired-over-turkmen-harvest-a16077>