

Black Sea Aggregate Harvest Down 27%

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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Hot weather has decimated this year's grain output from Russia, Ukraine and Kazakhstan, which normally supply a quarter of world wheat export volumes. **Denis Grishkin**

The Black Sea region countries, one of the world's key wheat exporters, are expected to cut their combined 2012 grain harvest by 27 percent, year-on-year, to 130 million tons due to a drought, the latest official forecasts showed.

Hot and dry weather has decimated this year's grain output from Russia, Ukraine and Kazakhstan, which normally supply a quarter of world wheat export volumes, as the United States experienced its worst harvest in more than half a century, sending global prices for wheat and corn into overdrive.

Adding to upward pressure on wheat prices were persistent rumors that Russia would ban grain exports this year, as it did after a drought in 2010. Russian President Vladimir Putin dispelled speculation on Wednesday, saying there were no talks over such a move, despite his concerns about rising grain prices.

Russia and Kazakhstan have almost completed their 2012 campaign and have harvested 96 percent and 99 percent of the sown area, respectively, while Ukraine has harvested 85 percent of the planted area.

Russia, historically the world's number three global wheat exporter by volume, is officially expected to decrease its 2012 crop to 71 million tons of grain by clean weight, down from last year's 94 million tons.

Its wheat harvest is expected at 40 million tons, down 29 percent, while barley crop is seen at 14 million tons and maize (corn) – up to 8 million tons.

By Oct. 9, Russia had harvested 70.58 million tons of grain by bunker weight with yields down 18.6 percent at 1.88 tons per hectare, Agriculture Ministry data, seen by Reuters, showed. The document had no latest wheat crop data.

Ukraine may cut its grain crop to 45-46 million tons this year, from last year's 57 million tons, according to official estimates.

The country has already harvested 36.3 million tons of grain from 85 percent of the planted area as of Oct. 8, according to the data provided by the Agriculture Ministry.

Poor weather cut the harvest of Ukrainian wheat to 15.5 million tons from 22.3 million tons in 2011, and barley crop fell to 7.2 million tons from 9.1 million.

In Kazakhstan, the Black Sea region's top producer of hard wheat, dry skies could cut this year's grain harvest to about 13 million tons by clean weight from last year's post-independence record crop of 27 million tons.

Kazakh officials declined to give a forecast for this year's wheat harvest.

To date, Kazakhstan has threshed a total of 14.3 million tons of grain by bunker weight from 99 percent of the sown area, data released by the Central Asian state's Agriculture Ministry showed. Yields averaged 0.94 tons per hectare.

Officials and analysts are not ready to forecast next year's grain harvest in the region, although the weather for its winter grain sowing campaign remains favorable, except for the South of Ukraine.

Ukraine, a traditional producer of winter wheat, planted key winter grain areas at the best and allowable time, making use of favorable moisture conditions, UkrAgroConsult said.

Farms have so far sown 6.4 million hectares with winter grains, or 86 percent of the originally expected area, compared to the 6.1 million sown by the same date in 2011.

Russian data on the winter grains sowing campaign was not available this week. As of last week, 76 percent of the sowing campaign had been completed. The country plans to seed slightly less than 17 million tons of hectares this year.

Kazakhstan is a traditional producer of spring grain.

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