

Grain Stocks Down 26% Year on Year

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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Russia's wheat crop is down more than a quarter from last year as the harvest nears completion.

The country's main grain stocks are far below 2011 levels, but inventories near big population centers are less depleted, government data showed Friday.

After traders reported that Ukraine would ban grain exports starting Nov. 15 to combat a shortfall resulting from drought across Black Sea growing regions, eyes are on Russia to see whether it can cover domestic needs and let exports flow.

President Vladimir Putin, who approved a decision to ban grain exports during a drought in 2010, has said export restrictions are not under consideration.

The government is due to start grain market interventions next week to stem rising domestic prices and has doubled the planned volume of sales from state stocks to 1 million tons to combat regional shortfalls and potential food-price inflation.

Grain stocks at large farms and processors stood at 35.8 million tons on Oct. 1, the state statistics office said, down 26.2 percent from the previous year, after drought savaged the crop.

The stocks were down nearly one-third in key southern exporting regions, at 6.83 million tons, and down 9 to 12 percent in central European Russia and the northwest, where the country's biggest population centers are located.

Russia exported a record 28 million tons last year thanks in large part to high stocks in the south, which increased after the government banned exports in August 2010 in response to a catastrophic drought. It maintained the ban until July 2011.

Officials say the 2012 drought was not as devastating as that of 2010. However, overall cereal and legume yields are being reported lower than in the 2010-11 crop year, with only a few million hectares left to harvest.

With 97.6 percent of the country's sown area harvested Friday, 71.8 million tons of cereals and legumes had been threshed from 38.1 million hectares, the Agriculture Ministry said.

Figures were by bunker weight, used to measure the crop in the course of the harvest. It is normally 5 to 7 percent higher than the clean weight obtained after the grain is cleaned and dried, but the difference may be less in hot, dry years.

Yields were down to 1.88 tons per hectare from 2.31 tons per hectare a year earlier. In 2010, yields were 1.89 tons per hectare.

Russia reaped 39.5 million tons of wheat by Oct. 19 with the wheat harvest 99 percent complete, a 32 percent decline in the harvest from the previous year.

Yields were down to 1.86 tons per hectare from 2.39 tons in the previous season.

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