

As Crisis Hits, Seed Giant Monsanto Sees Business in Russia and Ukraine

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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Monsanto has named Russia and Ukraine a priority for future investment.

Monsanto, the world's largest seed company, plans to open its first plant in Russia in coming years, stepping up its activities in the world's fourth largest grain producer as it seeks to counter the effects of a plunging ruble.

The ruble has almost halved in value against the dollar in the past year, hit by falling oil prices, a crumbling economy and political tensions, making local production more attractive.

"We have plans to increase local-produced seeds in Russia and to have a facility there," Leticia Goncalves, who heads Monsanto's operations in Europe and the Middle East, said in an interview on Thursday.

Monsanto currently operates in Russia through a network of local partners and distributors.

Goncalves declined to name them or give financial details of the firm's ongoing or future

business in the country.

Last year the company said it would launch a corn seed plant in neighboring Ukraine, whose currency has also dived, with initial investments of about \$140 million possibly rising to \$300 million over several years.

Ukraine is the world's sixth largest grain grower this season, and Goncalves said the region remained a priority for Monsanto.

"We still believe that Ukraine and Russia both are long-term opportunities for our business and we want to make sure we are in a position to accelerate our business growth despite the short-term geopolitical and macroeconomic challenges," she said.

Genetically modified organisms (GMO) are not used in seed production in Ukraine and Russia, as is generally the case in the European Union, which has been historically hostile to biotech crops.

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