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Crimea Asks Moscow for Financial Aid to Offset Hail, Drought Costs

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Sergei Aksyonov, the de-facto leader of Crimea. **Kremlin**

The leader of Crimea has turned to Moscow for financial assistance amidst a drought-induced state of emergency in several agricultural regions and $1 million in damage from a recent hailstorm.

Crimea has received more than $7.5 billion in financial aid from Russia in the four years since Moscow seized the peninsula in 2014. Russia has also taken an economic hit from Western economic sanctions levied for its annexation of the Black Sea peninsula.

The de-facto leader of Crimea, Sergei Aksyonov, lamented the territory's "uneasy" agricultural year and the subsequent crop loss.

"That's why I drafted an appeal addressed to Russian Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev requesting up to 400 million rubles ($6.3 million) in compensation for direct losses by Crimean farm operators," Aksyonov wrote in a Facebook post Tuesday.

Aksyonov cited a recent hailstorm that cost the region almost $1 million, along with a state of emergency following a drought in four regions caused in part by Ukraine's blockade of a major Crimean water source.

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The prime minister of the annexed region estimated damages from the drought alone at 400 million rubles last week ($6.3 million), less than the 1 billion rubles ($15.8 million) in damage he estimated in May.

Despite forecasts that it will halve its grain harvest this year, Crimea has stepped up grain exports to Syria to support Russian ally Bashar al-Assad's government.

Russia has also seen an unprecedented boom in its oyster and mussel harvest, primarily from farms in the Crimea region.

Meanwhile, as Russian President Vladimir Putin and U.S. President Donald Trump prepare to hold their first summit in Helsinki on July 16, the White House has reiterated its position Tuesday that the United States does not recognize the Russian annexation of Crimea.

Reuters contributed reporting to this article.

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