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# Putin Says Russia Will 'Monitor' Food Exports to 'Hostile' Countries

By AFP

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Russian President Vladimir Putin said Tuesday Moscow would carefully "monitor" food exports to "hostile" nations as the West pummels the country with sanctions over its military action in Ukraine.

"Against the backdrop of global food shortages, this year we will have to be prudent with supplies abroad and carefully monitor such exports to countries that are clearly hostile towards us," Putin said at a meeting on agriculture.

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The Russian leader also said that the country's food production "fully" covered domestic needs and urged officials to ramp up import substitution.

"We need to set clear targets for import substitution and persistently pursue them in the very near future," he said, referring to the country's "potential" in agriculture, industry and science.

He also said it was important "to minimize the negative external effects" for Russians who should have access to "high-quality affordable food products, including fish products."

"This is a key task for the current year."

Developing and import-dependent countries have been heavily impacted by Russia's military campaign in Ukraine — the two countries that account for more than a quarter of the world's annual wheat sales.

Supply chain problems caused by the Covid pandemic have quickly worsened since Putin sent troops to pro-Western Ukraine on Feb. 24, further adding to the price of food.

Russia is a major producer of fertilizer and the financial and logistics sanctions have also hit exports, which may depress agricultural production elsewhere and further fuel price increases.

Putin said logistical and insurance issues need to be resolved to resume fertilizer exports.

"There is a shortage and people will buy it. Nobody wants to die of hunger," said Putin.

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