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Ukraine Estimates Grain Harvest Fell Around 40%

By AFP

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A cargo ship carrying Ukrainian grain sails on the Bosphorus Strait in Istanbul, Turkey, Nov. 2, 2022.
EPA/ERDEM SAHIN/TASS

Ukraine estimates its grain harvest fell by around 40% year on year due to the Russian invasion, a representative for the country's industry told AFP Friday.

"We expect a grain harvest of 65-66 million tons" by the end of the year, the head of the Ukrainian Grain Association Sergiy Ivashchenko said, following a record harvest of 106 million tons last year.

"The main reason is the war," which immediately led to fuel shortages and hindered sowing, Ivashchenko said.

Ukraine is a major exporter but Russia's invasion in late February stopped shipments and blocked 20 million tons of grain in Ukraine's ports.

"Ports were blocked... this broke a cycle" by cutting farmers' source of income, Ivashchenko said.

"That, and of course the war, meant farmers did not have enough money to buy fertilizers, their yield decreased," he explained.

A landmark deal signed in July and brokered by the UN and Turkey established a safe shipping corridor for exports to resume.

"The occupation of several regions, fighting in the fields, and the destruction of infrastructure" still crippled production, Ivashchenko said.

"We usually sowed grains over about 25 million hectares. This year we only harvested over 18-19 million hectares," he said.

The landmark deal was extended for 120 days in November after intense negotiations with Russia, which temporarily pulled out of the agreement.

Overall, 580 ships transporting around 15 million tons of cereals have left Ukrainian ports since then, according to the country's authorities.

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