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Moscow Blames Sanctions for Russia-UN Food Deal Collapse

By AFP

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Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov **Natalia Kolesnikova / AFP**

Russia said Saturday that its agreement with the United Nations to facilitate exports of Russian food and fertilizers had collapsed due to Western sanctions over Moscow's offensive in Ukraine.

A day earlier, the UN said the three-year agreement, signed in 2022 in a bid to rein in global food prices, would end on July 22.

A source close to the discussions, who asked not to be named, told AFP the deal "will not be renewed" due to disagreements.

The UN signed the agreement with Russia on July 22, 2022, with the aim of facilitating exports of Russian food and fertilizers, despite Western sanctions on Moscow.

Russia's Foreign Ministry said on Saturday that extending the deal was not "envisaged."

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"Given the destructive line of Western capitals to increase illegal unilateral sanctions against Russia, none of the objectives [of the agreement] have been successfully completed," the ministry said in a statement.

The economic sanctions imposed on Russia spared fertilizers and grain, but fear of accidentally ending up on the wrong side of the law had paralyzed transporters and caused insurance premiums to skyrocket.

After intense discussions, Russia and the UN established a framework to facilitate insurance and financial transactions that was compatible with U.S., British and European Union sanctions systems.

But Russia — the world's largest fertilizer producer — had repeatedly complained the agreement was doing little to protect it from secondary sanctions effects.

Russia's Foreign Ministry said on Saturday that talks between the two sides could continue for the sake "of global food security."

A second agreement was also signed under the auspices of the UN on July 22, 2022, aimed at allowing the export of Ukrainian cereals blocked by Russia's war in the country.

That deal was seen as more successful, but Moscow, angered over continued obstacles to trade in Russian agricultural products, refused to extend it after it lapsed in July 2023.

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