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Ukraine Crisis Deepens Food Insecurity Across the Middle East & Africa

The coronavirus pandemic highlighted vulnerabilities in global supply chains, public health-care systems, and food and energy security. Russia's invasion of Ukraine is compounding these issues, increasing food insecurity and poverty across the globe. Russia and Ukraine are considered the breadbasket of the world. In 2021, the two countries exported more than one-quarter of the world's wheat. They are both major suppliers of corn, sunflower seed oil, and barley; Russia is also a major supplier of fertilizer, which is critical for agricultural production.

Food prices are soaring, exacerbating inflation rates and reducing the purchasing power of populations across the Middle East and Africa, where 70% of Russian wheat exports went in 2021. These escalating costs, fed by actual and anticipated scarcity, are exacerbating economic crises for Egypt and Lebanon, with a heavy reliance on Russian and Ukrainian wheat imports, and imperiling vulnerable populations in conflict zones, including Yemen, Syria, and Somalia, which heavily rely on emergency food aid. The United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization's Food Price Index, which measures changes in international commodity prices, reached its highest-level in March since the index began in 1990. It rose 12.6% from February to March. The agency reported that the rise in prices was largely due to the war in Ukraine.

Russia's invasion of Ukraine, coupled with Western sanctions against Russia, has caused sharp increases in energy and food prices that will have a long-term impact on global energy and commodity markets. Russia's invasion has pushed Ukraine to ban the exportation of wheat, oats, millet, buckwheat, and other foods to shore up its own domestic food supply. It has also reduced Ukraine's agricultural production capacity by causing mass displacement and destroying critical infrastructure and grain storage facilities – severely hampering the upcoming June harvest. Key maritime supply routes through the Black Sea have also been interrupted.

The Middle East and North Africa region is heavily dependent on food imports, especially staples like wheat. According to the World Bank, the Middle East and North Africa imports 50% of its food; the Gulf Cooperation Council countries specifically import between 80% and 90% of their food. Egypt imported more than 70% of its wheat from Russia and Ukraine in 2021. The entire region is therefore vulnerable to rises in food prices and supply chain disruptions.
*Paraphrased Comments

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HYDROGEN **FULL COURT PRESS**

Alex Zapantis

General Manager - Commercial Global CCS Institute

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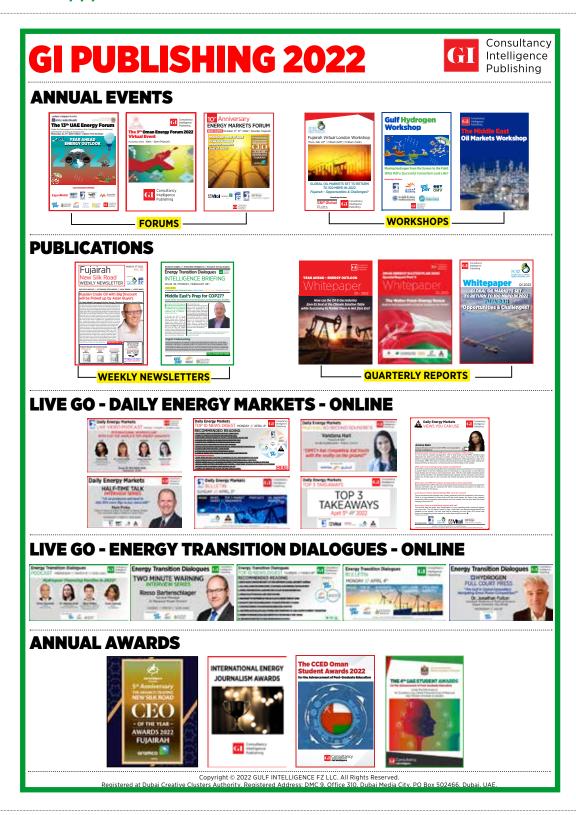


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