

# Russia's war on Ukraine is driving up wheat prices and threatens global supplies of bread, meat and eggs

March 15 2022, by David Ubilava

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Credit: AI-generated image ([disclaimer](#))

Russia and Ukraine between them account for almost [a quarter](#) of the world's wheat exports.

Russia and Ukraine are also big exporters of maize (corn), barley, and

other grains that much of the world relies on to make food.

Wheat alone accounts for an estimated [20%](#) of human calorie consumption.

Since the start of February, as war became more likely, the grains and oilseed [price index](#) compiled by the International Grains Council has jumped 17%.

The big drivers have been jumps of 28% in the price of [wheat](#), 23% in the price of [maize](#) and 22% in the price of [barley](#).

Russia and Ukraine account for [one fifth](#) of the world's barley exports. Maize is a common substitute for wheat and barley.

Russia and Ukraine are also enormous producers of sunflower oil, between them accounting for around [70%](#) of global exports.

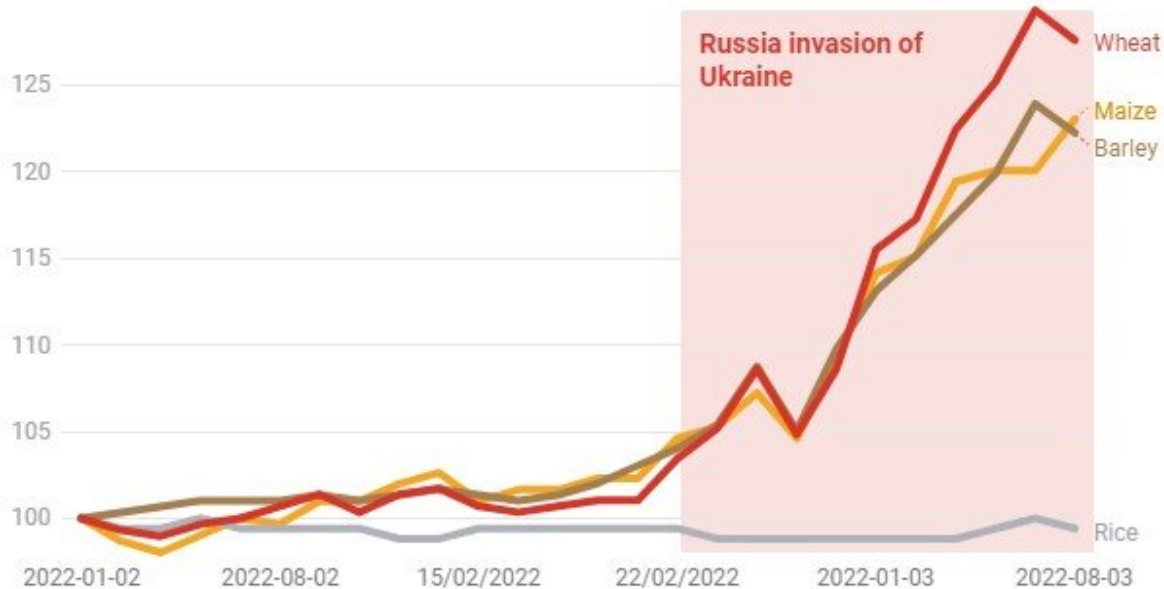
Among the world's biggest wheat importers are [Egypt](#), along with its North African neighbors Algeria and Nigeria, one of the world's poorest nations.

Indonesia, Turkey and the Philippines are also big importers.

Supplies from Russia might come through—and Russia is in desperate need of foreign exchange. But Ukraine's ports are closed, [transport infrastructure](#) is disrupted and might not be working when [harvest season](#) begins in July, and barley planting would normally begin about now.

## Wheat, maize, barley and rice price indexes

100 = price at February 1, 2022



Credit: International Grains Council

## Rationing and riots have happened before

Sudden shortages and price hikes will hit poor countries and their poorest citizens hard. Low income households spend far more of their income on [staples](#) such as bread than high income households.

The effects will flow through to meat and egg prices, as [cereal grains](#) are used as feed of livestock and poultry production.

Throughout history, violence and unrest have flowed from hikes in commodity prices. [Egypt](#) was racked with bread riots and rationing in 2017. [Kazakhstan](#) suffered massive protests in January after a spike in liquefied gas prices.

Humanitarian organizations are set to face greater calls for [food aid](#), which will be more expensive to provide.

Fortunately, the big southern hemisphere wheat producers, Australia and Argentina, have produced [bumper crops](#).

The value of Australian wheat production is set to hit an [all-time high](#).

But [food supply chains](#) and global stability are certain to be tested.

It will take a village to stop this war and mitigate its repercussions. The rich and powerful of the village should do all they can to hold it together.

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