Escalating strikes between Ukraine, Russia threaten global food supplies

Jason Melanovski
13 August 2026

The rapid escalation of missile strikes by both Ukraine and Russia on logistical and agricultural infrastructure threatens to further exacerbate global food prices and undermine working class living standards in Ukraine and worldwide.

According to the Associated Press, the ongoing United States war of aggression against Iran has already driven global food prices to rise to their highest level in over three years. Within the US itself, the rapid rise in fuel, fertilizer and shipping costs have pushed grocery prices roughly 2.9 percent higher year-over-year. In July, cereal prices already rose 3.4 percent month on month. Global wheat prices rose 5.8 percent.

Food prices are also bound to rise because of the massive heatwaves during the summer. This impact is compounded by the escalating war between NATO-backed Ukraine and Russia, which increasingly targets economic infrastructure in the Black Sea region, a critical area for global food supplies. Hundreds of millions, especially in some of the poorest countries of the world in the Middle East and Africa, rely on food supplies from Russia and Ukraine, two of the world's most important agricultural exporters.

On Wednesday, Russian Foreign Ministry spokesperson Maria Zakharova stated that as a result of Ukrainian strikes on Russian economic and agricultural targets, global food prices and grain shortages would inevitably rise. Zakharova made her comments following Ukrainian strikes on the Russian port of Novorossiysk, resulting in three dead, including a child, and the stoppage of work at major grain terminals in the city. The strikes also caused global grain futures to spike.

Agricultural consultant SovEcon has predicted that as result of the strikes, Russia will export just 3-3.4 million metric tons of wheat this month after averaging 5 million tons in August for the past five years. If the lower prediction holds true, it will mark the lowest August export since 2017. Earlier, Russia's Union of Grain Exporters and Producers warned that Russia's shortfall in wheat supplies this season could amount to between 30 to 35 million metric tons—around 15 percent of total global wheat trade. Russia is the world's largest wheat exporter. Earlier, a major grain export terminal at Russia's grain port of Taman had suffered "significant damage" because of a drone strike.

Retaliatory strikes by Russia on Ukrainian ports in the Black Sea, specifically its last major seaport in Odessa, have also drastically worsened Ukraine's ability to export its agricultural products. Dozens of cargo ships and bulk carriers have been hit in the Black Sea in recent weeks.

Last week, *Bloomberg* reported that Ukraine's Agriculture Ministry had cut its forecast for agricultural exports by 54 percent for 2026-27. Ukraine is one of the world's top exporters of oil, sunflower, wheat and other grain shipments.

Neighboring Poland has been instrumental in helping Ukraine conduct the NATO-backed war against Russia. However, Warsaw has banned the direct import of Ukrainian agricultural products to protect its domestic market, forcing Ukraine to use the Black Sea to ship its grain. As a result, Ukraine exports more than 90 percent of its agricultural products through its seaports. Agricultural exports account for between 40 to 50 percent of Ukraine's export revenue and the majority of the impoverished country's overall exports.

While Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky recently engaged in a "40 day campaign," touring NATO capitals to drum up support for the war, the situation on the battlefield has changed little, outside of yet another increase in casualties in a disastrous war that has killed millions already. The civilian death toll is also rising dramatically, on both sides.

Notably, systematic Ukrainian strikes on Russian online marketplace Wildberries warehouse facilities resulted in the deaths of at least 13 workers and dozens of injuries. Wildberries has responded by moving some of its logistics hubs to neighboring Kazakhstan. At least 12 warehouses have been hit since mid-July. According to Al-Jazeera, Wildberries accounted for 3 percent of Russia's GDP in 2025 (or $79 billion), and almost half of its online retail. One strike on a Wildberries warehouse in Yekaterinburg reached as far as 1,297 miles (2,087km) away from the Ukrainian border.

Ukraine has also targeted Russian holiday resorts, killing dozens in strikes on beach resorts, among them many children. On Monday, Ukraine carried out another drone attack deep inside Russia on the petroleum hub of Nizhnekamsk in central Russia's Tatarstan region on Monday, killing 13 people and injuring 78 others, according to local authorities.

The Ukrainian drone strikes are carried out with the AI-assisted Hornet system, which was developed by a US company owned by former Google CEO Eric Schmidt, one of the richest men in the world and a figure closely associated with the US intelligence and military apparatus.

The increased attacks on Russian oil refineries have triggered a fuel shortage and long lines for fuel, forcing the Kremlin to begin importing fuel from abroad. The Kremlin has retaliated with an increase of missile and drone attacks on Kiev, Odessa and other cities, which have killed dozens. Meanwhile Russian forces have continued to make incremental advances along the frontlines in the Donetsk region, claiming the capture of several villages in recent days.

While the reactionary "40 day campaign" may have strengthened Zelensky's already declining support among his Western backers following his dismissal of former Defense Minister Mykhailo Fedorov, the resulting rise in prices of grain, fuel and fertilizer threaten the spread of poverty for the Ukrainian and global working class.

An updated World Bank study "Listening to Ukraine" estimated that 41.6 percent of Ukrainians now live in poverty compared to 37 percent just a year ago. The overall poverty rate effectively doubled since the start of the war in 2022.

Wealth inequality has likewise increased in Ukraine with the Gini coefficient, a measure of income or wealth inequality in a society, rising from 0.41 in 2023 to 0.44 in 2024 and 0.50 in 2025. Much of the growth in inequality can be attributed to inflation with housing and utility prices rising by approximately 50–70 percent since 2020 and food prices rising by approximately 70–80 percent, and in some regions—by nearly 90 percent. Such prices will undoubtedly continue to skyrocket as a result of the escalation of the war to include civilian economic and logistical infrastructure, notwithstanding the ongoing war on Iran.

In contrast, the Ukrainian ruling class has seen its fortunes rise as the war continues to devastate the working class. According to the report, real labor income for the poorest quintile of households fell by more than 30 percent. Meanwhile, among Ukraine's wealthier groups it rose by more than 10 percent. Several current and former members of Zelensky's cabinet, as well as some of his closest personal and political associates, have been embroiled in major corruption scandals, involving the embezzlement of millions of dollars.