

War in Ukraine has big impact on food supply

Wageningen Economic Research (WEcR) is launching a website this week to provide information to the Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality, the farming community and other interested parties on the impact of the war in Ukraine on the food situation.

Firstly, Ukraine and Russia are major global exporters of grain. Russia normally accounts for 20 per cent of grain exports, Ukraine for 10 per cent. A lot of grain now lies in storage in both countries. Because of the sanctions against Russia and the obliterated ports in Ukraine, little or none of that grain is reaching the world market. Moreover, now is the time for Ukrainian farmers to sow for the next harvest, says WUR alumnus Kees Huizinga, who has a large farm in the Ukraine. But the war makes that impossible. It is too early for WEcR to say how much effect this will have on global grain prices. 'It takes time to calculate scenarios with our economic models,' says researcher Ron Bergevoet. Meanwhile, farmer Huizinga has fled the country and his farm is at a standstill.

Drivers are becoming soldiers

Bergevoet foresees many more economic effects of the war besides the loss of grain production in Ukraine. The export of Dutch agricultural products to the Ukraine and Russia – such as flowers and seed potatoes – has stopped abruptly. The import of artificial fertilizer and wood from Belarus has been halted by the European boycott. And agricultural production in Europe is hampered by the high energy prices. Bergevoet foresees transport problems too, now that many Ukrainian truck drivers have returned to Ukraine to fight the Russian army. And organic meat producers in the Netherlands have got to find alternatives to the GM-free soya they have always imported from Ukraine. AS