

Russia plays Hunger Games with the world

Australia helped to build a rules-based order in trade. Vladimir Putin now wants to wreck it for his own ends.

[Vasyl Myroshnychenko](#) *Ukraine's Ambassador, Australian Financial Review*
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Since Russia blew up the [Black Sea Grain Initiative on July 17](#), commodity prices for grains have had their biggest jump since 2012.



The destruction in Ukraine's major port of Odesa in past weeks. **AP**

On the surface, that sounds like it is at least financially good news for Australia's primary producers and exporters.

That's why it is important to look below the surface and see that ending the grain agreement, under which wartime Ukraine was exporting its own agri-products is actually bad news for Australia too.

First and foremost, playing Hunger Games with global food supply – such as now blocking Ukraine's seaborne exports - is morally abhorrent.

More than 400 million people around the world rely on vital Ukrainian grain supplies to ensure their food security. Under the former agreement, around two-thirds of the overall volume of Ukrainian exports went to developing countries and to those most vulnerable to food insecurity. More than half of the global supply by the [United Nations World Food Program was covered by Ukrainian grain](#).

Almost 33 million tonnes of agricultural products were exported to 45 countries under the agreement. By refusing to extend its participation, Russia puts millions of people around the world at risk of hunger and provokes rising food prices.

Among those increasingly at risk from food insecurity are Australia's friends and neighbours in Oceania and the Pacific. Russian weaponisation of food only adds to the food supply challenges they face as a result of climate change.

No country in the world has the right to destroy global food security and stability.

Australia is actually one of the architects of the international rules-based order and trading system – a system that thrives through stability over volatility. Therefore, in addition to the moral dimension, Australia would be rightly concerned about the deliberate Russian strategy of destabilisation.

Russia's weaponisation of food seeks to trigger social unrest, uncontrolled migration and domestic political crises, including in Australia's own region.

Indeed, the volatility Russia actively foments has also led to greatly increased input costs for Australia producers – and thereby higher prices for Australia consumers. This comes when both the government and the Reserve Bank try to battle with inflation's impact on the economy.

For example, fertiliser prices have become extremely high due to the uncertainties caused by Russia's unprovoked and illegal invasion of Ukraine. In some cases for Australian farmers, the per tonne price of urea has been three times that of a tonne of produced wheat. These aspects can only be passed through and felt at the kitchen table.

Confronted with what is clearly wrong, and what is bad for Oceania, farmers and consumers, what is our counsel to our great Australian friends [who have so generously supported us to date?](#)

We urge the Australian government to join efforts to save vital Ukrainian grain exports to the world. Together, we must protect those most vulnerable around the world whom Russia tries to hurt. Australia can lend its very credible voice to those of UN member states firmly demanding that Russia resume its participation in the deal and stop its Hunger Games.

Failing Russian participation, the fact is that Ukraine, the UN, and Türkiye can jointly ensure the operation of the Black Sea food corridor. Australia can again join with UN member states to support this effort.

Ukraine has also launched an important humanitarian program, Grain from Ukraine, initiated by President Volodymyr Zelenskyy. Within its framework, Ukraine has provided grain free of charge to those in need.

We engaged 34 donor countries, who helped fund the program and save people from the threat of hunger. We are grateful to every donor who has joined the Grain from Ukraine program and Australia's participation would be very welcome.

It's not well known that Andrew Forrest's Munderoo Foundation, in August of last year, provided \$1.8 million to help fund the first maritime shipment of Ukrainian wheat grain for humanitarian operations the Horn of Africa run by the UN World Food Program.

Additionally, the foundation donated \$4.21 million to help the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation deliver increased storage capacity for Ukrainian grain and oilseed, as well as the provision of loading and unloading machinery.

No country in the world has the right to destroy global food security and stability. All people around the world have a right to stability. Australia has the right to stability. Oceania has the right to stability. Europe has the right to stability.