

Online Panel Discussion

Food Security in the Western Balkans and the Republic of Moldova



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27 June 2022, 2:00 – 3:30pm

Online via Zoom

Panel:

Stephan von Cramon-Taubadel, Professor for Agricultural Policy, Director of the Department for Agricultural Economy and Rural Development, University of Göttingen

Per Brodersen, Director of the German Agribusiness Alliance at the German Eastern Business Association, Berlin

Tatjana Brankov, Associate Professor at the Department of Agricultural Economics and Agribusiness, University of Novi Sad

Moderation:

Christian Hagemann, Executive Director of the Southeast Europe Association, Munich

Topic

There is a global food crisis looming in the wake of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine. Russia and Ukraine are two of the most important producers of grain in the world, with a market share of about one

quarter of global exports. Russia is at the same time the world's biggest exporter of wheat. Now, these important deliveries are in question due to the direct repercussions of the war and Russia's strategy of weaponizing food exports. Ensuring food exports from Ukraine has become very difficult not only because of the blockade of Black Sea harbours and affected logistics in the war zone, but also due to a lack of fertilizers and uncertain prospects of bringing in and, above all, storing this year's harvest in the country. Russia itself has stopped its own grain exports from March until end of June and it is unclear whether an agreement can be found for exports from Ukraine to leave its Black Sea harbours. Along these lines, former President and now Deputy Chairman of Russia's Security Council Dmitry Medvedev called food exports Russia's 'silent weapon'. It is thus expected that Russia's policies will have dire consequences on global food markets. In particular poor countries who are net importers of food will suffer from looming shortages, either directly as they are dependent on imports from Ukraine or Russia, or indirectly as market prices rise. Germany has already reacted to these developments, using its G7 presidency to establish a Global Alliance for Food Security in May. At a UN Security Council meeting on 6 June, EU Council President Charles Michel blamed Russia directly for the looming food crisis, thereby countering a Russian narrative which the Kremlin tries to spread in the global south that western sanctions are responsible for this development.

A crucial question is how Russia's war against Ukraine with its food-relevant outcome will also affect countries in Europe. Especially Western Balkan countries and the Republic of Moldova seem to be vulnerable due to low purchasing power of their population, and because citizens spend large parts of their incomes on food. Still, the situation varies in the region: While mountainous Montenegro and Albania highly depend on imports, self-sufficient Serbia could be a potential alternative source of grain for the countries of the region.

Overall, our panel discussion will shed light on how strongly the countries of the region might be affected by the looming crisis, how Russia, the EU and Germany are dealing with the issue, and what national and intra-regional responses are at hand to avoid food security problems.



Registration

This discussion will take place online via Zoom. Please register here for participation: <https://www.sogde.org/de/formulare/food-security>

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