

Drought Causing Wheat Yield Decreases

June 19, 2012



Harvest losses are exceeding 7 million tons of grain as rain remains scarce in the country's breadbasket.
Maxim Stulov

Russia, the world's third biggest wheat exporter, will lose about 7.2 million metric tons of grains in three key growing regions this year due to drought, according to estimates from regional governments and a producer.

Krasnodar, Russia's biggest growing region, which harvested 11.4 million metric tons of grains last year, may have 4 million tons less wheat and may see its barley crop fall by 500,000 tons this year, the region's governor, Alexander Tkachev, said, according to a statement on his administration's website Tuesday. The wheat yield is expected to fall to 4 tons a hectare from 5.5 tons a hectare, he said.

"There is a forecast saying we can lose up to a quarter of the harvest," Tkachev said. Krasnodar's final grain crop may fall 3 million tons to between 8 million and 8.5 million tons in 2012, he said.

Valery Zerenkov, governor of the Stavropol region, Russia's second biggest grower, declared a state of emergency in half of the territory Tuesday because of drought, according to an order

published on the region's agriculture ministry website. The grain harvest is expected to be 2.5 million to 3 million tons smaller than last year's 8.2 million tons, the government said last week.

In Rostov, the country's third biggest grower, where three of the region's 43 districts are in drought, rainfall on the weekend wasn't enough to save heat-damaged grains, said Andrei Kruglikov, director of the agricultural division of Rusgrain Holding, a Russian grain and poultry producer.

Recent rains may have helped ear maturation on the grain plantings that survived the drought and spring crops including corn, sunflowers and sugar beets that are still growing, he said by phone from the company's fields.

Rostov may have lost up to 15 percent of its crop, Kruglikov said. Last year, the area harvested 7.7 million tons of grains, according to the state statistics data. That means the region's harvest may fall by as much as 1.2 million tons, according to Rusgrain.

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