EU HEADLINES

NATIONAL PERSPECTIVES OF EUROPEAN DEBATES

Grain Ban

Following the imposition of unilateral grain import bans, tensions continue to grow between Poland, Slovakia, Hungary, and Ukraine.

European Headlines is a weekly newsletter from the European Movement International highlighting media perspectives from across Europe. Click here to subscribe.



The root of the problem

The European Commission's decision to lift the temporary ban on grain imports planted "cracks in this wall of solidarity" between Ukraine and its neighbours in Central and Eastern Europe, reports *DW*. The influx of wheat, maize, rapeseed, and sunflower seeds transported via the Black Sea ports prior to the Russian blockade now plough through Poland, Slovakia, Hungary, and Romania which, except for the latter, announced unilateral indeterminate import bans. While concerns over the potential withering of local farmers' profits and storage capacity serve as the official justification for disregarding the Single Market rules, the necessity to cultivate support amongst domestic constituents ahead of elections is of no less importance, particularly in Poland and Slovakia. While the Hungarian government is following the typically pro-Russian line, the firm stance on the ban can help Orbán mend the fences with its next-door neighbours. Meanwhile Romania, whose elections are not until late 2024, and Bulgaria limited themselves to demanding stricter control and oversight of grain exports from the Ukrainian side, but nonetheless opened a can of worms involving local farmers and far-right forces. The European Commission remains on the fence.

Read the full article



Bring home the bacon

"The fight for Ukraine is taking place not only on the front lines, but also on the grain markets," pinpoints *Pravda*. Nevertheless, it proves to get more difficult for Central and Eastern European governments to balance commitments to the Ukrainian war effort and their citizens at home, with the latter consideration tipping the scales in favour of banning Ukrainian grain imports from entering the Slovak market. While Slovak farmers are already set to receive financial compensations amounting to 16 million euros in total for the losses incurred as a collateral of the global wilting grain prices, the Slovak government is careful to contemplate the Ukrainian government's offer to control the amount of the exported grain by issuing export licenses to a limited number of companies. Minister of Agriculture Jozef Bíreš urges to dig deeper for a more long-term perusal of the disruptive impact Ukrainian produce, meats, and grains will potentially have on the European agriculture and food industry. Alluding to the prospect of Ukraine joining the Single Market, he emphasises that no exceptions can be made when it comes to upholding European standards and interests.

Read the full article



Don't have a cow

Amid ongoing controversy and a lawsuit in the World Trade Organization (WTO), the Polish government is not backing down or mincing words, writes *Notes from Poland*. Kyiv levelled the complaint against Poland, along with Hungary and Slovakia, in response to their unilateral bans on imports of agricultural products from Ukraine – bans that Ukraine claims run afoul of both WTO and EU rules. The European Commission is still analysing the bans to determine their legality. Poland is not deterred: "Such a complaint to the WTO does not impress us in the sense that we have no intention of withdrawing the embargo because of it," said the government's spokesman. The French and German agriculture ministers criticised the move for contradicting solidarity, the common market, and the single market. Digging in even deeper, head of the Polish parliamentary foreign affairs committee Radosław Fogiel called the criticism "unjustified arrogance." With elections coming on October 15th, the entire issue is highly politicised internally, with opposition parties putting the blame squarely on the shoulders of the ruling Law and Justice (PiS) party.

Read the full article



Sticking to their guns

Poland decided to go one step further in its current spat with Ukraine, reports *iDNES*. After having decided on a grain embargo, the country has now also moved to stop sending weapons to its neighbour. "We will not send any more weapons to Kyiv", said Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki. According to him, Poland will now focus on arming itself with modern weapons. However, the PM promised to maintain the transit of Ukrainian goods and explained that the base in Rzeszów, built with the Americans and NATO, will "continue to fulfil its role". Poland had so far been a staunch supporter of Ukraine, but the grain dispute greatly soured the relationship between the two countries. During a speech at the UN General Assembly, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said that some "friends in Europe" are playing political theatre and turning "grain into a thriller". Polish President Duda fired back that Poland will take care of its own interests, "effectively and decisively", and that Ukraine should remember the help it received from Poland. On Wednesday, the Polish Minister for European Affairs doubled down and mentioned that if the grain dispute continues to escalate, it could affect the willingness of the Polish public to support Ukraine.

Read the full article

Copyright © The European Movement International, all rights reserved.
The European Movement International
Place du Luxembourg 2, 1050 Brussels, Belgium

This is a weekly newsletter from the European Movement International.
Click here to subscribe.