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# Does Africa's Starving Population Need Russian Grain?

According to Agroexport, food supplies to African nations have more than doubled over the last five years and had reached up to $7 billion by the start of 2025.

Africa is a non-political, but very real business, it is a good partner for Russian agricultural producers and fertilizer manufacturers: there is huge demand for grain, seed oils and fertilizers on the continent. However, the Forbes magazine opines that only those who are not afraid of anything can work with Africa. Millions to be made on the continent won’t come easy, but obstacles, ranging from strong competition and pirates to droughts, are quite real.

It is enough to recall the recent scandalous statement by Kenyan journalist Jeremy Simiyu, who reported that garbage bins in the continent's poorest countries are filled with moldy bread made from Russian flour. According to the journalist, at least one third of hungry people never receive this bread, because in Africa, they don't know how to store wheat and baked bread. So, first Moscow has to educate Africans about storing food, to install required refrigerating equipment, otherwise these issues will only keep piling up.


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**Don't Wait For Handouts, But Learn And Gain Experience**

Be that as it may, a most important issue, discussed at a recent Russia-Africa conference on strategic partnership in the agricultural sector, convened in Ethiopia's capital, Addis Ababa, was: what does the Black Continent offer – are there greater risks or greater profits?

The African side at the meeting was presented by top executives of such corporate giants of the continent as Ethiopian Investment Holdings, Kenya Network for Trade and Export Services, Eastern Africa Grain Council, Ryli Beef and Grains Limited, Bemaco, Alakuku Group and others.

From the Russian side, the discussion featured about 300 of representatives from major businesses, scholars and government officials, including the RF Ministry of Agriculture, Agroexport, Rosselkhoznadzor, Rossotrudnichestvo, Rusagro and others.

As part of the meeting, experts also discussed working conditions under Western sanctions and how to build sustainable supply chains for food and fertilizers to Africa.

The Jeune Afrique publication opines that the issue is not limited to trash cans only and that the African food market is undergoing a profound transformation, fueled by population growth and rapid urbanization. These factors make it one of the most dynamic in the world, creating steady growth in demand for grain, especially for wheat and rice. Yet, the continent's agricultural sector and production fail to match rising consumption, leading to an increasing imbalance.
“We have arrived to discuss experience, and not handouts – said Yevgeny Primakov, head of Rossotrudnichestvo. – It is Russia’s experience in overcoming total dependence on imports, expertise in building a high-efficiency agricultural industry, currently exporting food globally. We are ready to share this experience and projects”.
Primakov pointed out, that the conference agenda focused on technologies, including processing of agricultural raw materials, fertilizers, development of the banking sector and logistics, and also related challenges.
“We are not discussing quantity of grain we are capable of delivering. Trust me, we have a lot", – assured the head of Rossotrudnichestvo.

Ksenia Bolomatova, Executive Director of the Union of Grain Exporters and Producers, in her speech at the conference emphasized that over 20 years the grain consumption on the African market has grown by 66%, when its production has increased just by 55%. This gap is especially wide in the wheat segment, where the demand has risen by 65%, but its production has gone up by 24% only. Under these conditions, Bolomatova noted, the key objective is to build long-term


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partnerships with such a reliable external supplier of grains as Russia.

The discussion participants came to a clear conclusion: it is required to transfer Russian experience, knowledge and technology to Africans as quickly as possible in order to upgrade their agricultural sector, while simultaneously helping to build human resource capacity in the African agricultural sector.


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**Africans Won’t Say No To Fish**

Russian Deputy Minister of Agriculture Andrey Razin also called on Africans to cooperate in technology, knowledge exchange, breeding, and seed production.

“In our view, - Razin stressed, - This is a new growth point that will help the African continent ensure its own food security and minimize dependence on external supplies”.

According to Agroexport head Ilya Ilyushin, in addition to grain, Russian supplies of vegetable oils, meat, and processed foods are gaining momentum. So, the export of fat-and-oil products has almost doubled in recent years, exceeding $720 million. Shipments of finished goods increased in value terms by 51%, and livestock products – by 4 times.
Furthermore, prior to the imposition of sanctions, Russia had supplied nearly 200,000 tons of fish to the continent annually, and today the goal is to return to this level.

“We see great potential for increasing the supply of Russian agricultural products to Africa. By 2030, the volume of Russian agricultural exports to African countries may exceed $7.5 billion”. – said Ilyushin.
Mohamed Abdi Hayir, Minister of Agriculture and Irrigation of Somalia, said that Africa is realizing the importance and readiness to feed its people.

The Minister stated that the continent has large land areas suitable for agriculture, significant water resources and young population, ready for innovation. “Africa has the potential to not only feed its own population but also significantly contribute to global food security”.

Potential areas for cooperation were presented by Gerald Makau Masila, Executive Director of the Eastern Africa Grain Council (Kenya). These include pre-sowing treatment, pest control, technologies for fertilizer application, grain storage and processing.

“We lose a lot of grain after harvesting. According to some estimates, the losses reach up to 25%. The post-harvest level offers great investment opportunities, and we are inviting our Russian colleagues to work together with us”, – Gerald Masila summed up.

In addition, there is significant potential for investment in agricultural processing and the creation of port infrastructure to


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both facilitate imports and promote exports to other regions. This is a specific matter for Russian investors and builders, said Gerald Masila.

**Fertilizer Issue Needs To Be Resolved**

Fertilizers represent one of the most important sectors in Russian-African trade. Experts in the agricultural sector predict this continental market will grow over 30% to $20 billion by 2030. Even if they maintain the current share of 10%, Russian producers are expected to generate over $2 billion in revenue, according to Forbes expert estimates.
Another challenge is the low technological and managerial standard of agriculture, primarily expressed by the degree of fertilizer use at African fields: 20 kg per 1 hectare in densely populated Sub-Saharan Africa, when in South Asia and Latin America it is 170 kg, in East Asia – 300 kg, and in Europe – 800 kg.

In 2024, according to calculations by the Russian Association of Fertilizer Producers, Moscow supplied 1.9 million tons of fertilizers to Africa, worth nearly $1.5 billion (50% growth over three years).
Key players in this market are PhosAgro and EuroChem, which account for 35% and 25% of all Russian fertilizer exports to Africa, respectively.

**Moscow: Ice Cream For Nigeria**

Moscow provides significant assistance to African countries. Following Mayor Sergey Sobyanin's directive, the city is actively supporting Moscow businesses in expanding trade and economic ties with various African nations. Food industry products have become a key driver of development for Moscow-based manufacturers.

Last May, Moscow-based companies, in particular, delivered 709,5 tons of humanitarian aid to Burkina Faso.
In addition, the Russian side is finalizing the necessary procedures to provide free aid to Niger in the volume of up to 20,000 tons of wheat.

According to the Department of Investment and Industrial Policy of Moscow, growth of Moscow’s exports to Africa could be driven by dairy products, vegetables, poultry, chocolate products and animal feed. Just recently Moscow has resumed supplies of poultry meat and offal to Benin and started ice cream exports to Nigeria.

**According to FAO data, in 2024, more than 20% of the population, or 307 million people, were facing hunger in Africa.*


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***South Africa, one of the most economically developed countries in Africa, purchases grain and fertilizers, as well as coffee extracts, essences, and concentrates from Russia. According to Agroexport, the volume of Russian supplies more than doubled in 2024, amounting to $205.4 million (942,000 tons of products).*


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