

Black Sea Crop Update

3 February 2023

Agribusiness News

UN report on the environmental impact of the war in Ukraine

Already burdened by various environmental challenges, Ukraine now faces multiple additional problems from the conflict that either exacerbate existing issues or add new ones.

The UN environment agency (UNEP) has published a preliminary report on the environmental impact of the conflict in Ukraine

In the report, they talk about the impact on farming.

Agricultural land has been affected by physical degradation, chemical pollution and exploded ammunition.

Ammunition and missile residues in craters may become a source of chemical pollution from heavy metals, along with fuel, toxic chemicals and bits of metal.

Craters, which in some images are reminiscent of WWI battlefields, will need to be filled in and levelled, and I'm not sure how you do that safely.

The report suggests 30 million hectares of land may have been mined, which seems high given Ukraine's total land area is around 60 million hectares, but clearly, it's a big problem.

Post-conflict and all farmland will require thorough inspection and demining.

Unexploded ordnance and landmines will remain a significant hazard long after a conflict has ended and may leave large areas of land unfit for agriculture.

Food and grain storage facilities have been targeted, most notably the Nika-Tera terminal in Mykolaiv, resulting in a fire that most likely released harmful emissions.

Farm animals are dying due to farmers' inability to access farms or get animal food and veterinary support to them.

The estimated number of animals that have died so far is 42,000 sheep and goats, 92,000 cattle, 258,000 pigs and a staggering 5,700,000 poultry.

Bees are probably not high on the agenda during a war, but Ukraine is one of the biggest honey producers in the world and a key exporter to the EU with a developing domestic market.

Although difficult to verify, the report says losses in bee colonies could be as high as 30%, along with beehives, equipment and production lines.

The report finishes by saying the obligation to protect the environment in times of armed conflict is reflected in international law and legal precedent, including the UN Charter and the Geneva Conventions.

Not sure that makes any difference, though.

You can find the full report here <https://news.un.org/en/audio/2023/01/1132922>

