
Graphic detail

Daily chart

Russia's invasion of Ukraine is causing record-high food prices

The poorest countries will be hit hardest

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Much of the rise is in the price of cereals. The FAO's index for them rose by 17% in March. The price of wheat alone increased by almost 20%, reflecting the fact that Ukraine and Russia made up a third of the global wheat market between 2018 and 2020, according to the International Food Policy Research Institute. The cost of maize and barley, the other big cereal exports from the Black Sea region, increased by 19% and 27% respectively.

Prices are likely to remain high. The FAO reckons that a fifth of Ukraine's wheat harvest this season will be lost because of the war, and future harvests in both Ukraine and Russia are in jeopardy. Disruptions to fertiliser supply from Russia, a major exporter, will add to inflationary pressure. Meanwhile, the cost of vegetable oils soared by 23% in March, partly because of poor harvests in South America, and droughts have caused additional difficulties.