



Written by [Angeline Tan](#) on April 18, 2023

Ukraine Accuses Poland of Breaching Deal; Lambastes Hungary for Anti-war Stance

SINGAPORE — Ukraine made headlines this weekend for its barbs on European neighbors Poland and Hungary.

On April 15, the Kyiv regime of Volodymyr Zelensky accused Poland of violating a bilateral deal inked by both countries this month, following Poland's decision that same day to ban Ukrainian grain and other agricultural products to shield local markets from [“destabilization” due to cheap Ukrainian produce](#).

The country's agriculture and development ministers were to implement “relevant legal acts to protect the Polish agricultural market against destabilization — including a temporary ban on imports of agricultural and food products from Ukraine,” the Polish government declared.



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Announcing the ban, the chairman of Poland's ruling Law and Justice Party (PiS), Jarosław Kaczyński, maintained that Poland remained “unchanged friends and allies of Ukraine.” However, he added, “It is the duty of every state, every authority, good authority in any case, to protect the interests of its citizens.

“Today, the government has decided on a regulation that prohibits the entry and importation of grain into Poland, but also dozens of other types of food [from Ukraine],” Kaczyński declared during his party convention. The prohibited items range “from grain to honey products, very, very many things,” he stipulated.

Ukraine's Agriculture Ministry claimed the move violated the bilateral agreement. “We understand that Polish farmers are facing a difficult situation, but we are emphasizing that now the most difficult situation is for Ukraine's farmers,” the ministry said, elaborating that “resolving various issues by unilateral drastic actions will not accelerate a positive resolution of the situation.” Ukraine urged Warsaw to ink a new agreement on the matter as soon as possible to tackle bilateral concerns.

Hungary subsequently joined Poland in banning Ukrainian agricultural imports, incurring Kyiv's wrath as well. Announcing the move, Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán said that the ban was necessary as the presence of Ukrainian grain would severely harm local farmers.

The Hungarian Ministry of Agriculture announced a “temporary ban” on the import of grain and oilseeds from Ukraine. Officials justified their move by the fact that there were no “meaningful” EU-wide measures to shield markets from “destabilization” caused by the unbridled inflow of Ukrainian produce.



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The Hungarian government is “committed to protecting the interests of the Hungarian farming community,” the ministry declared, stating that the temporary ban would last until June 30. Budapest hopes that time frame will give Brussels “enough time to introduce meaningful and lasting EU measures to reconsider the full duty-free nature of Ukrainian goods.” The banned products would also entail “a number of other agricultural products,” the ministry added.

“With production practices that are no longer allowed in the European Union, and as a result, with extremely low production costs, Ukrainian agriculture, with full duty-free and free trade opportunities,” makes it impossible for the EU farmers to compete, said Minister of Agriculture István Nagy, referring to “extraordinary measures.”

Kyiv did not receive Orbán’s anti-war stance and remarks about Ukraine’s finances well. Ukraine’s Foreign Ministry expressed that it was “cynical” of Hungary’s criticism of European Union funding for Ukraine when Budapest obtains money from Brussels as well.

“Another anti-Ukrainian statement,” spokesman [Oleg Nikolenko](#) declared. “It is cynical of the Hungarian leadership to speak on other countries’ financial issues while Hungary itself receives a lot of money from the EU to support its economic stability.”

Moreover, Nikolenko made a debatable claim that Ukraine was protecting Hungary and the rest of the EU from Russia. By giving money to Ukraine, he claimed, the EU “invests first and foremost in its own security,” as Ukrainians are “defending Europe” with their lives from “unprecedented Russian aggression.” He then said that Hungary should be grateful to Ukraine for “a peaceful sky over Budapest and other European cities.”

Although Hungary does get billions of euros in subsidies from Brussels, the EU is currently denying the country a combined amount of €34 billion, including Covid-19 recovery funds, due to Budapest’s pro-life and pro-family policies and its skepticism toward immigration.

In a prior interview with a Hungarian radio station, Orbán had characterized Ukraine as “a non-existent country in financial terms,” completely reliant on EU and U.S. donations that would not last indefinitely.

“The fall in economic indicators is huge, which is completely understandable due to the war. Obviously, Ukraine can’t finance itself,” the Hungarian leader stated.

Orbán highlighted that the EU is now funding Ukrainian salaries, pensions, and healthcare, setting aside “huge sums, which the European economy is missing out on.”

He also pointed out that the duration of the Russo-Ukraine conflict would hinge on whether the West wants to persist in backing Ukraine. “The moment when America and Europe answer ‘no’ to that question — the war will end,” he declared.

Although Budapest has participated in bankrolling the Kyiv regime through joint EU mechanisms, the situation keeps worsening for the Hungarian minority in Ukraine’s Transcarpathian Region, Orbán lamented, alluding to Ukraine’s alleged mistreatment of Hungarians in Ukraine.

In a February speech, Orbán claimed that Ukraine had taken down Hungarian symbols in settlements across Transcarpathia, removed heads of Hungarian language schools, and left many Hungarians “dying on the frontline.”

The EU and its member states and financial institutions have supplied over €50 billion (\$55.3 billion) in financial aid to Ukraine since February last year, including €12 billion in arms and €30 billion in macro-financial aid. Such figures do not include the [\\$113 billion](#) the U.S. Congress has set aside to back



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Ukraine, of which only about 20 percent has been cash help.

Unlike other EU members, although Hungary has provided humanitarian aid to Kyiv, it has adamantly refused to send military aid to Zelensky's government. Rather, Budapest has adopted a more sensible tone compared to its EU neighbors, urging for peaceful solutions to the conflict and decrying sanctions imposed by Brussels on Moscow, stating that these sanctions are undermining the EU more than Russia.

In a separate move, Slovakia on Friday [forbade](#) the processing and sale of Ukrainian grain due to its discovery of chlorpyrifos, a [pesticide banned in the EU](#), in a 1500-ton shipment of grains. The country's agriculture ministry announced that the ban will include all grain of Ukrainian origin, as well as flour made from it that is presently stored in the country.

"The presence of a pesticide, which is not authorized in the EU and has a negative impact on human health, was confirmed in the controlled sample," the ministry said. On April 13, Slovakia's Agriculture Minister Samuel Vlčan said that authorities would destroy the entire shipment of grains.

The ministry noted that Slovak authorities plan to collect samples of all Ukrainian grain and flour stored in Slovakia to determine if it is worthy of consumption. It further indicated that it currently "does not recommend the import of any Ukrainian grain and its products," and that it would update all EU member states about the findings.

Notwithstanding the negative health and financial consequences of Ukrainian produce, Brussels denounced Poland's and Hungary's bans on Ukrainian imports.

"We are aware of Poland and Hungary's announcements regarding the ban on imports of grain and other agricultural products from Ukraine," an EU Commission spokesperson said on April 16. "It is important to underline that trade policy is of EU exclusive competence and, therefore, unilateral actions are not acceptable."

Although the statement also indicated that it was "crucial to coordinate and align all decisions within the EU," especially in "such challenging times," it failed to mention whether Warsaw and Budapest would face sanctions from Brussels over their decisions.



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