



Written by [Angeline Tan](#) on February 26, 2024

Ukraine Demands Poland Punish Farmers for Dumping Grain Amid Widespread EU Protests

Ukraine has urged Poland to punish those culpable for destroying 160 tonnes of Ukrainian grain in an attack at a Polish railway station.

Kyiv sent a note to Warsaw demanding that the Polish authorities find and penalize the guilty, Ukraine's Deputy Prime Minister Oleksandr Kubrakov said on X on February 26.

The official said the destruction of the grain at the railway station amid protests was an act of "impunity and irresponsibility." "Those who have damaged Ukrainian grain must be found, neutralized, and punished. Two friendly civilized European states are interested in this," he penned.

Earlier, the official had reported that 160 tonnes of grain, en route to other countries via the port of Gdansk, had been dumped at the railway station near Bydgoszcz, in eastern Poland. It was reportedly the fourth instance of Ukrainian grain being spilled by protesting Polish farmers in recent weeks.

Although Polish farmers have been at the forefront of rampant protests by European farmers in recent weeks, they have been protesting against "unfair competition" from Ukraine for over a year.

The European Union (EU) suspended import duties, quotas, and trade defense measures on imports from Ukraine in June 2022, after the Russo-Ukrainian conflict closed down many of the country's usual grain export routes. Nonetheless, the flow of cheap grain from the east quickly ignited protests by farmers and truckers in neighboring countries. Spurred on by its former government, which ruled until last year, Poland's farmers and truckers have blocked border crossings and motorways.

Like its counterparts across Europe, the new government in Warsaw has refrained from suppressing farmers so far, apparently hoping to gather significant public support and in view of the risk that a strong response to the protests could prove a boon for conservatives at the European Parliament elections in June.

On February 23, a Ukrainian government delegation visited the border with Poland to discuss the protests. Prime Minister Denys Shmyhal said Kyiv had prepared a five-step plan "of mutual understanding" to find a compromise for both countries, and noted that "the blockade hits the entire Polish-Ukrainian trade and the economy of our countries. Not only Ukraine is losing from it, but Polish entrepreneurs who export goods worth \$12bn annually to our market are losing from it."



Krzysztof Warsaw Tour Guide/Flickr
Polish farmers protest



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The plan details Ukraine's agreement with a European Commission proposal to limit poultry, eggs, and sugar exports, including an appeal to the EU to forbid Russian agrarian exports. Shmyhal added that Kyiv is also prepared to apply a verification mechanism to grain, corn, sunflower, and rapeseed exports.

Ukrainian leader Volodymyr Zelensky said on February 25 that it was vital for Kyiv to maintain close ties with Poland. Still, he added, his country is prepared to protect businesses that have been hurt by the border blockades.

Ukrainian border service spokesman Andriy Demchenko [said](#), "Unfortunately, the blockage continues. In total, 2,200 lorries are queuing on Polish territory and (Polish) farmers are letting several vehicles through (in total) per hour in both directions. More blocked are those lorries coming from Ukraine."

On February 25, Polish farmers blocked a major highway into Germany to protest against EU environmental proposals and unrestricted imports of cheap produce from countries such as Ukraine.

As per the RFM FM media outlet, Polish farmers lined up their tractors and other equipment on both sides of the A2 highway near the border crossing in Slubice, forcing police to divert traffic to other checkpoints. The blockade of the crossing, not far from the German city of Frankfurt, began at 1 p.m. local time, said police spokeswoman Ewa Murmylo, who explained that movement on both sides of the motorway had been halted.

One of the protest organizers, Dariusz Wrobel, stated that although the blockade had initially been scheduled to last for 25 days, the group decided it would instead be a 24-hour "warning" strike until 1 p.m. local time on February 26.

The decision was made after talks between the farmers and representatives of transport and trade organizations, Wrobel explained. He warned, however, that the blockade could be reinstated on a much larger scale. "This will depend on things that we can't predict," he admitted in a statement to AFP, underscoring that Polish farmers need to "start taking ourselves seriously."

Among the protesters' demands is that leftist Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk personally come to the border to discuss issues involving the agricultural sector. Warsaw has so far signaled no plans of holding a meeting with farmers.

Polish protesters have also blocked border crossings with Ukraine, calling for a ban on the import of non-EU agricultural products. Similar blockades have [emerged across the EU](#), as farmers argue that countries such as Ukraine do not have to adhere to EU regulations and taxes, meaning their products are cheaper and possess an unfair advantage.

Meanwhile, agriculture ministers from across the EU were set to meet in Brussels on Monday to discuss environmental policy proposals that have sparked ire among agricultural workers in a wide range of members. Farmers have surrounded EU institutions with [strategic blockades](#), in their [latest initiative](#) to defend rural life against the Green Deal. Farmers began streaming into Brussels from around 1 a.m. local time, before effectively controlling access to the European Parliament, Council, and Commission buildings by [establishing strategic blockades](#). Notably, EU staff were ordered to work from home in an emergency email circulated over the weekend.

The farmers hope to build on the success of over a thousand tractors shutting down the city earlier this month during an EU Council meeting. They have already rebuffed previous concessions made by Brussels on climate policy. Presently, European MEPs are expected to vote on a controversial rewilding bill on February 27 — one that farmers say would make large expanses of the EU unfarmable.



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