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• (1100)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Kody Blois (Kings—Hants, Lib.)): I call this meeting to order.

Welcome to meeting number 22 of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food. I'll start with a few reminders.

Today's meeting is taking place in a hybrid fashion, pursuant to the House order of November 25, 2021. The proceedings will be made available via the House of Commons website. So that you are aware, the webcast will always show the person speaking, rather than the entirety of the committee. We are televised today, colleagues. My understanding is that it will be available in the days ahead for CPAC, if they choose to use it. Screenshots or taking photos of your screen is not permitted.

Because we have a couple of new folks on the screen who are joining us as witnesses, for interpretation, you can toggle between English and French for your language of choice. That's at the bottom of your screen. Other than that, we would ask, for the benefit of our translators, that when you are speaking, you try to speak slowly so that they can keep up. Sometimes there is a bit of a delay, particularly virtually. We know we are going to do our best on that end.

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2) and the motion adopted by the committee on Monday, May 30, 2022, the committee is commencing its study of global food insecurity.

I would now like to welcome our witnesses for our first panel. Joining us today from Ukraine by video conference, we have Dr. Mariia Bogonos, who is the head of the centre for food and land use research at the Kyiv School of Economics. We have Mykhailo Amosov, who is a land use expert from the Center for Environmental Initiatives Ecoaction. We also have Yulia Klymenko, who is a member of Parliament at the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine and the first deputy chairperson of the committee on transport and infrastructure.

Colleagues, I am required, according to the standing orders, to tell you that we had a bit of technical difficulty with Ms. Klymenko's microphone. We weren't able to get a complete test done, but we have played around. We hope we're able to hear her testimony. She has a device, and we're going to do our best to make it happen.

There are a couple of other things I would like to mention, colleagues. We have, of course, a number of CUPP interns in the

room. This is the Canada-Ukraine parliamentary program. There are 41 interns on the Hill.

Given what we are studying today, which is global food insecurity as a direct result of the war in Ukraine, we're very thankful to have our witnesses on the screen.

To our witnesses, let me thank you.

The CUPP interns have also played an important role of engaging with folks in Ukraine. Thank you so much. Thank you for your work on the Hill, and thank you for being here today.

We're going to start with five-minute opening statements from each of our witnesses.

Dr. Mariia Bogonos, you have five minutes. I'll turn the floor over to you.

• (1105)

Dr. Mariia Bogonos (Head, Center for Food and Land Use Research of Kyiv School of Economics, As an Individual): Thank you very much for this invitation.

I would like to start by reminding you that Ukraine, throughout its history, which spans far beyond 1991, has served as the breadbasket for many of its neighbouring and more distant regions. For example, in the 1950s, it produced more than 25% of the Soviet Union's grains. Over the last decade, Ukraine gained quite a prominent position in the global export of grain and sunflower oil. For example, in 2021, it exported 10% of global wheat exports and 50% of global sunflower oil exports.

On February 24, with the invasion by the Russian Federation on the northern, southern and eastern borders of Ukraine, the situation has changed dramatically. As of today, compared to February 2021, for example, Ukraine doesn't control more than 20% of its territory, which translates into roughly eight million hectares of arable land, which by comparison is 70% of arable land in Germany, which is one of the major grain exporters in the EU. It could be compared to approximately 20% of arable land in Canada.

What does this mean in terms of grain production? Ukraine is losing around 10 million tonnes of wheat, three million tonnes of corn, three million tonnes of barley and two million tonnes of sunflower oil. With this loss of land alone, Ukraine forgoes around 50% of its wheat exports and around 40% of its sunflower oil exports.

With the blockade of Azov and the Black Sea ports, the situation is even worse because, even in the best case scenario with the full capacity of the Ukrainian railway, the export capacity of Ukraine through the western borders is reduced at least by a factor of 10. We are comparing six million tonnes previously per month to 600,000 tonnes now, in the best case.

Why should we care about the exports? This is because sensitive countries, less food-secure countries like Egypt, Bangladesh, Yemen and Libya, are highly dependent on imports of wheat, which constitute more than 30% of the daily calorie intake of the population. They also depend a lot on imports from Ukraine. For example, on average, these four countries import more than 25% of wheat from Ukraine—some of them 50%, some of them 25%.

This means that the tremendous reduction in Ukrainian production and exports, in addition to the high prices for grains we had already observed before the war, will put these countries at a high risk of famine. In Ukraine, as well, the situation is not great because the affordability of food, meaning the financial ability of Ukrainians to buy food, is reduced by approximately 40%. This is a huge number. It means that we are maybe expecting certain nourishment issues in a larger population of Ukraine.

To conclude, unless stopped, the Russian Federation will continue devastating Ukrainian lands, and it will continue threatening domestic and global food security.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Dr. Bogonos,

We're now going to move to Mr. Amosov, for up to five minutes, please.

Over to you, my friend.

Mr. Mykhailo Amosov (Land Use Expert, Center for Environmental Initiatives Ecoaction): Good evening and good morning.

My name is Mykhailo Amosov. I'm here representing a government organization known as Ecoaction. Here are a few words about food security issues in Ukraine and in the world.

As the previous speaker said, a lot of agricultural land was actually occupied, bombed or attacked by Russian missiles and military equipment, etc. This illegal Russian invasion completely changed everything in every sector of the Ukrainian economy and agriculture.

This year, in 2022, Ukraine sowed seven million hectares less of agricultural crops than the previous year. It will cause shortages on the world food market. Actually, I see more risks for global food security than for only Ukrainian food security as a lot of countries, such as Yemen, Egypt, Indonesia and Bangladesh, really depend on Ukrainian grain exports. Even if these countries find alternatives to Ukrainian grain, these alternatives will be really expensive for them. We should find a way to help to export Ukrainian grains from Ukraine.

In Ukraine, we saw that the main problem is logistics for Ukrainian agribusiness, because a lot of silos and warehouses were destroyed by Russians. Actually, when all these objects were de-

stroyed, we felt really big food shortages in the first days in supermarkets and in every store. We see this huge Ukrainian dependence on big agribusiness. Here we need to give more support for small and medium-sized Ukrainian agricultural farms, as we see them as more adaptable to new realities.

Even now, small, medium-sized and private households are producing more foods, more vegetables and more fruits than big agribusiness. For example, southern parts of Ukraine, like Kherson and Zaporizhzhia, were providing a lot of fruits and berries to other parts of Ukraine. Now it will be a big problem for Ukrainian citizens to build a healthy diet for everybody in Ukraine. These watermelons and cherries, etc., were produced by small and medium-sized farms. There was not a big involvement of the big agribusinesses there.

We need more state support for small farmers as they're more adaptable. As an environmental organization, we see it as more sustainable to the environment than big agribusiness.

That's it from my side. I'm happy to respond to any questions you have.

Thank you.

• (1110)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Amosov.

We'll turn to Ms. Klymenko. Let me start by saying on behalf of the 11 other members of Parliament around the table that it's great to be able to connect with a fellow parliamentarian. Thank you for your work. I know you're going to do your best with your headset microphone.

It's over to you, Ms. Klymenko.

Ms. Yulia Klymenko (Member of Parliament, First Deputy Chairman of the Committee on Transport and Infrastructure, Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine): Thank you.

I'm Yulia Klymenko. I'm a member of the Parliament of Ukraine and first deputy of the infrastructure and transport committee and the former vice-minister of economy.

It's my honour and pleasure to address the committee of the House of Commons of Canada, a country that symbolized a dream coming true for those Ukrainians who came to the Canadian land 120 years ago and built with all the other nations a prosperous, humane, peaceful and beautiful country, which supports forces of good and justice.

As the topic of our discussion today is a global food crisis, let me start with a number of facts that will illustrate the role of Ukraine as a global food supplier and assess the devastation to the global food supply purposefully brought by the Russian invasion.

Ukraine feeds 400 million people worldwide, mostly in the low-income countries. Ukraine covers in global exports 10% of wheat, 15% of corn and 47% of sunflower oil. Ukraine exports 58 million tonnes of agricultural commodities annually, and 90% of it was shipped through the seaports of Azov and the Black Sea through a developed infrastructure ecosystem of river and seaport facilities equipped with storage and export laboratories. That ecosystem turned 32 million hectares of highly fertile, arable area land into a well-developing industry, next only probably to the Ukrainian IT sector.

On February 21, Russia starting bombing Ukrainian cities, killing civilians and purposely mining and blocking all Ukrainian ports, systemically targeting all grain storage facilities, laboratories, railway infrastructure, fuel storage and oil refineries.

Here, I would like you to focus on probably the most important message in my speech. The interruption of the global food supply is not collateral damage from the war in Ukraine. It is a planned hybrid weapon to further massively destabilize the global economy and political order through the instigation of famine in Africa and Asia, which will result in migration flooding into North America and western Europe.

We have seen this scenario previously played out by Russia in Syria, which caused massive migration to Europe and deformed European political processes. This time food is the weapon and the scale of the crisis will be much bigger. Additional benefits that Russia expects will be extra revenue resulting from the skyrocketing of global food and commodity prices in the same way as they benefit from growing energy prices.

That's why in the Kherson and Donetsk regions in Ukraine Russians have already stolen 500,000 tonnes of Ukrainian grain and moved it to the Russian territory for further export.

As of today, Ukraine stores 22 million tonnes of grain ready to be exported with 40 commercial vessels already loaded with one million tonnes of agricultural commodities. However, it's blocked in the Black Sea by Russia.

Understanding how critical our food supply is for many countries—for example, Egypt depends on Ukraine for 80% of its wheat consumption—and despite the war, Ukraine has invested into tripling the river, railway and road transportation capacity. Now we can transport 1.5 million tonnes of grain monthly through all these capacities. Previously, it was 0.5 million tonnes. To empty our storage before we get our new crop harvested will take at least 15 months even with increased capacity. You can see a fundamental problem here both for countries in need of supply and for the new harvest as we will have little storage facilities available for the new harvest.

Ukraine is ready to create all necessary conditions to resume exports from the port of Odessa. The issue is how to make sure that Russia doesn't affect the trade route or bomb the city of Odessa.

Ukraine is looking for a solution together with the UN and our western partners. However, no guarantees from Russia have been received so far. Russia's proposal to establish corridors for exporting Ukrainian grain in exchange for lifting sanctions is absolutely unacceptable.

• (1115)

Looking at this year's harvest, we should consider that 20% of Ukrainian land is occupied by Russians and 13% of agricultural land has unexploded mines and shells, resulting in tractors being blown up and farmers dying in the fields when they try to cultivate the land. Nevertheless, we have planted, and we expect to harvest 80% of all arable land in Ukraine.

However, the volume of the harvest will be significantly lower this year, resulting from severe shortages of fertilizers, fuel and labour. Most of the active qualified male population is fighting on the front lines. Those women and men working so hard in the fields and securing a further food supply deserve our appreciation and need our strong support in order to produce food for people in need in Africa and Asia.

This is what we need to do together to avoid global food crises: Ukraine has to defeat Russia in the sea, in the air and on the ground.

To unblock Ukrainian sea routes, the Ukrainian military has to sink 25 more Russian warships and submarines by anti-ship missiles and MLRS—multi-launch rocket systems—and demine the sea routes.

To protect our agricultural land and infrastructure and make sustainable transportation corridors, we will need to strengthen the air defence as well as hold sustainable ground defence operations against Russia's ground advances in eastern and southern Ukraine. That is why we call for a further supply of armed vehicles—LAVs, UAVs—artillery rounds of 155-millimetre NATO-standard ammunition, M777 howitzers and robotic demining systems.

To support Ukrainian agriculture export capacity, we need to reconstruct destroyed grain storage facilities and railway and road infrastructure and repair, re-equip and increase the number of export phytosanitary and veterinary laboratories.

All the above-mentioned help will allow us to end the war and will allow Ukrainians to return to their homes and jobs to harvest and feed the world, to teach, to treat and to create our bright future. It will be much cheaper to invest in heavy weapons for Ukraine than to try to resolve prolonged global famine, migration, unrest and geopolitical turmoil.

Also, I would like to end my presentation by thanking you for all of the political, financial and military support of Ukraine, as well as the warm and welcoming attitude of the Canadian people for all Ukrainians who have had to flee the war. I have a personal experience, with my two youngest sons staying for 100 days in Toronto with relatives while I'm staying in Kyiv and my husband is helping the Ukrainian army as a sniper. I hope to take my kids back in two weeks and make their future safe in Ukraine.

Thank you very much.

• (1120)

The Chair: Thank you very much, Ms. Klymenko.

Just as a reminder, I think that by and large you did very well with your mike, but there was just a little bit of feedback. When you are asked questions, which undoubtedly you will be, if you could just be mindful of that feedback, that would be great.

Let's go to questions.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Lehoux, you have the floor for six minutes.

Mr. Richard Lehoux (Beauce, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I would like to thank the witnesses for taking the time to speak with us this morning. I assure them that our thoughts are with them at this very difficult time.

My first question is directly to you, Ms. Klymenko.

You say that, at the moment, about 10% of arable land is mined. This has major consequences. You said that 80% of the area was seeded, but will you be able to harvest it?

[*English*]

Ms. Yulia Klymenko: Yes.

As I said, 13% of our agricultural land has unexploded mines and shells. Yes, we will harvest our new crop if the war does not go further from eastern and southern Ukraine into the central part, because we will keep Russian troops out in the southern and eastern borders and will not allow them to come further. However, to keep them kicked out from our land, our Ukrainian land, we need heavy weapons, as I've said. This is the only guarantee that we can harvest crops from 80% of our arable land in Ukraine. Yes, we can harvest that 80%, but we need to keep the Russian troops out of our land.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Richard Lehoux: Your infrastructure has also been significantly affected. Is it badly damaged? I'm talking about storage structures, such as silos, and the roads used to transport grain to its destination, if you will. What is the current state of your infrastructure?

• (1125)

[*English*]

Ms. Yulia Klymenko: At this point in time, Russians have bombed and destroyed approximately 25% of our railway infrastructure and I think up to 10% of our road infrastructure, including bridges. They have also very particularly and specifically destroyed grain storage as well as fuel storage.

To take out crops, you need fuel and you need storage for new crops. The Russians are bombing it all the time, so it would be a great help if you can help us to build and renew storage as well as a part of our infrastructure. I understand that it's a long way, but we need railways, roads, rivers and also the blocked ports to export our crops to Africa, Asia and many other countries. They are waiting for it. All my Asian and African colleagues are just praying that we

can unblock the seaports and deliver grain. It's for people who are already starving in Africa, unfortunately.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Richard Lehoux: Canada has imposed a 35% surtax on all fertilizers imported from Russia. In your opinion, does this have a positive impact, in the context of the conflict you are currently experiencing with the Russians, or will it only hurt us more?

[*English*]

Ms. Yulia Klymenko: Yes, I think it's a good solution, because any dollar, Canadian, U.S. or any kind of dollar or euro coming to Russia is turned into bullets and killing us. They have to be isolated economically and politically and kept, with their Kremlin elite, out of the economic environment as well as the political environment.

Unfortunately, this is the only way you can punish Russia. You don't have a lot of trade with Russia, as I remember, in Canada. Fertilizers are important, but they have to pay a price for the violence, and we cannot feed the beast because this beast will definitely turn the global economy into dust.

What they are doing is destroying the global economy by destroying food supply chains and by increasing prices on energy, on food and many other things. You have to understand that, at this point in time, political, economic and continental war are linked to each other. They are destroying many economic models of other countries by sending migrants and by increasing prices. They are struggling in Europe because the energy prices, oil prices and food prices are sometimes double, triple or 40% more, making the European economy not very competitive to, for example, Asian economies.

Yes, unfortunately we have to—

[*Translation*]

Mr. Richard Lehoux: Thank you, Ms. Klymenko.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Ms. Klymenko and Mr. Lehoux.

Mr. Louis, you have the floor for six minutes.

[*English*]

Mr. Tim Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I want to thank all of our panellists for being here on this very important day, and I want to start by saying that you have Canada's unwavering support with the humanitarian aid we're providing, the immigration measures, the economic sanctions and the military aid. As a nation, we stand shoulder to shoulder with you.

Even on the ground in all of our communities—I know I can speak for my own—we have grassroots organizations that are volunteering for supports and resources to help displaced people. You have our support, but the message I'm getting now is that Canada as a nation and the world need to step things up and do even more. That message is clear and resonating.

Ms. Klymenko, member of parliament and the first deputy chairman of the committee of transport and infrastructure in Ukraine, thank you for your service.

You said that right now it would take 15 months to empty the storage of grains that you have and, obviously, you said that would not allow space for the new harvest. You are working with the UN and other partners. I wonder if you can expand on what more we can do to help with that backlog, because that will get food out to people, and it will help with the new harvest coming in.

• (1130)

Ms. Yulia Klymenko: As I said, the only sustainable way, unfortunately, is the heavy weapons. We can clean and deblock our ports, but we need the heavy weapons, which we don't have, for cleaning and demining, and also anti-ship missiles. This is the best sustainable way.

Sure, we have to work in parallel with the UN and other countries to make temporary food corridors and export our grains. We understand that the world depends on our grains. We cannot allow ourselves just to burn it. Unfortunately, if we will not transport these grains, we will have to waste it, to burn it. We need to put new crops in the storage or to build new storage, which is almost impossible to build in two months. In two to three months, we will have a new crop, and we need to empty our existing facilities.

For that, we need two things. First is working on temporary food routes with the UN and western countries. We're asking you to put pressure on Russia to allow us to export these grains and feed people in Africa and Asia.

The second is that we're expecting that western countries will be united and will provide us with heavy weapons so that we can do these food routes more sustainably. Russians ships should be out of the Black Sea and the Azov sea, because they are violating international law. The Black Sea works under international law and rules. It's not only Ukrainian, so to say, shore and coast. It's international marine legislation. They're simply violating and blocking. We have a lot of foreign ships staying in our ports, because they don't allow them to get out from the ports.

There are the two ways: to work with international organizations on temporary routes, and to deblock the sea permanently and sustainably.

Mr. Tim Louis: Thank you.

You also mentioned that this war was designed to destabilize your food supply, both in Ukraine and then using food as a weapon to destabilize the world economy.

As the minister of transportation, can you give us a bit of the status of your ports, your rails, the roads, the situation as it exists right now and the challenges? I understand that about 30% of your trans-

port infrastructure has already been destroyed by Russian military offensives.

Ms. Yulia Klymenko: Yes. All of our ports are blocked, so there is no possibility to go through the ports. It was done, as I said, very purposely, and from the beginning, from the first day of the war. They just blocked the ports, understanding that this will increase the global crisis. As well, it will lead to heavy migration from Africa and Asia. This is a kind of hybrid weapon for them. They're using food and grain as a hybrid weapon, and not against Ukraine but against civilized countries.

On the second, 25% of our railways are destroyed. We are repairing them constantly in order to keep them functioning. We are doing it. We're doing it and we are losing people. More than 120 people working on railways have died, because they were repairing during the bomb shelling and during the active war actions. People are paying the price.

What we have also is that we have the rivers functioning. We can use the Dnieper River. We have three terminals there. We're trying to increase the capacity of these ports so that we can export, but it's a long-term project. It's not like in two months we can do it. It's one year or two years. It's taking a lot of time to build terminals and additional capacity on the river.

Roads are also destroyed, but the worst thing is that they are destroying grain storage as well as fuel storage. We have a huge deficit of fuel for the citizens as well as for the agribusinesses, and the price is skyrocketing.

• (1135)

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Louis.

Thank you, Ms. Klymenko. You're doing very well.

I will just remind you to try to avoid the feedback, but keep it up.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Perron, you have the floor for six minutes.

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

First of all, I sincerely thank the witnesses. Our hearts go out to them and we will do everything we can to help them.

Ms. Klymenko, since the beginning of your testimony, we have been talking about the destroyed infrastructure and all that, but what do you need in concrete terms? You have the opportunity to talk to elected officials in the Government of Canada. What more can we do, starting tomorrow morning, to help you? You talked about weapons, but could we focus more on opening up the ports, for example? How should we do that?

[English]

Ms. Yulia Klymenko: As I said, there are three basic things you can do. First of all are heavy weapons, and I understand that you don't have a whole range of weapons as does, for example, the U.S. or Europe, but you have armoured vehicles like LAVs and UAVs. You have artillery round ammunition. You have howitzers. You have robotic demining systems, so we can clean our agricultural land of mines and shells.

That is very important because, with what they are doing now, it is possible to mine land at a distance of 100 kilometres or 80 kilometres. Russian troops, for example, are staying 80 kilometres from agricultural land and they can just send mines this distance, so they are purposely destroying our agricultural land.

What we need also are robotic demining systems. We also need help to restore, repair and build new grain storage and laboratories, which are very important because all our laboratories.... To export grain you need to take samples to laboratories. Our laboratories are mainly in the ports because we export 90% of all our grain and oil through the ports. Now we need to build a new chain of laboratories for our western borders in railway stations, on roads, for customs, so to speak. We need to build that from scratch because, as I said, we didn't expect that we would need it on the railways or roads. We had two seas.

Those are actually two things we need and you can help us with those, but heavy weapons are our priority. We clearly understand that we need to push them back from our territory and that's the only sustainable way for us to harvest, to take our harvest and to grow more to harvest in the next year to feed the world. They will always blackmail the whole world through agricultural crisis and fuel crisis, which they are doing now.

It's only a matter of time before they say they will close sea routes for two weeks and they will not allow the UN to come. They do that all the time with humanitarian corridors. I can tell you that the Russians didn't allow people in the city of Mariupol to take these people, our people, Ukrainian citizens, through humanitarian corridors or to bring food there from non-occupied Ukrainian territories.

As a result, more than 20,000 Ukrainians died in this city without food, water, medicine and without being evacuated, so what do you expect from these people, from Russians who are doing this in a Russian-speaking city basically? It was a Russian-speaking city very close to the Russian border, and they did this to Mariupol. I do not believe in any so-called temporary solutions with Russians. Either you defeat them or they will blackmail the whole world.

• (1140)

[Translation]

Mr. Yves Perron: Speaking of the shortage, you mentioned that you have managed to seed 80% of your fields, as I understand it. Of course, this crop will not represent 80% of your usual crop. Even if you can get the grain out through the ports, next year you may have a problem.

How much do you think you'll be able to harvest this year, approximately? I know it's a difficult question, but do you have an estimate?

[English]

Ms. Yulia Klymenko: It's difficult, but we have estimations. We think we will be able to export the same amount, which is probably 22 million to 30 million tonnes of grain. For that, we need storage. We need somewhere to put this new crop. This is the biggest challenge and problem. That's why we need to take out the old crop and put in the new one.

We expect that we will be able to deliver 30 million tonnes of grain to the African and Asian countries and many other countries next year. Our consumption is dropping because six million Ukrainians left Ukraine. They went to Europe and many other countries, so we have decreased consumption internally and we can sell it externally.

[Translation]

Mr. Yves Perron: Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Perron.

We'll now go to Mr. MacGregor for six minutes.

[English]

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to all of our witnesses for helping guide our committee in this study. We really do appreciate the time that you have taken to join us today.

I would like to start my questions with Mr. Amosov with Ecoaction.

Sir, I was looking at your website and you had an article there about how the war has put a lot of pressure on the natural grasslands of Ukraine. Our two countries have that in common. We also have large tracts of land here that are natural grasslands.

Your article also says that we shouldn't take land from Mother Nature but from the invaders. You were talking about a lot of the Russian and Belarusian companies that lease land in Ukraine. Can you inform our committee about your efforts in that regard?

Mr. Mykhailo Amosov: Thank you for the question.

Yes, we have such a problem when agribusiness takes more land for their operations. It's already wild ecosystems. Maybe in the Soviet Union it was arable land, but then it went back to grasslands and even natural reserves. Then agribusiness took it into operation again. Now, because of the Russian aggression and the shortages in land for sowing campaigns, we see this risk as the demand for more land increases when we need more land, more grain and more exports, etc.

We compare it with Russian and Belarusian companies, which lease land in Ukraine from private persons, from government and from communities. We would like to take this land from Russian companies and put it into operation for Ukrainian farmers. That would be fair for us.

Those are the main points here.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: Thank you for illustrating that for our committee.

Ms. Klymenko, in your opening statement you referenced how Russian operations, especially in the occupied lands of Ukraine, are essentially stealing the agricultural produce of Ukraine and using it for their own profit.

What have you heard about the treatment of Ukrainian farmers in occupied lands? Here in Canada, the demographics are that our farmers tend to be on the older end of the spectrum. There's a real challenge in our country in getting new generations involved in farming. It's a skill set that can't be easily replaced.

Could you just illustrate what the plight of Ukrainian farmers is like in occupied lands? Also, can you go into a little bit more detail about what's happening to that produce from the Russian occupiers?

• (1145)

Ms. Yulia Klymenko: Yes. As I said, half a million tonnes of Ukrainian grains have already been stolen by Russians. Mostly they are delivering this either to Russia or Syria and trying to sell it through these countries.

Occupied territories and farmers are really struggling because, first of all, Russian soldiers are managing agricultural businesses on occupied territories. They are basically taking out, very cheaply, from the farmers' harvest—

The Chair: Ms. Klymenko, I apologize, but we're having a bit of an issue with the mike. I think it's bit too close to your mouth. We were pretty good up until now, so we'll trust that we can make it work, but we were having an issue with translation.

I've stopped the clock, Mr. MacGregor.

Ms. Klymenko, why don't we try that again? I apologize for interrupting, but if you could try to pay close attention, as you were before, because you were spot on in the past.

Ms. Yulia Klymenko: I hope it's good now.

Russian soldiers stole half a million tonnes of Ukrainian grain and moved it, as I said, to Russia and Syria. They're treating our farmers in occupied territories very badly. They are actually taking the grain for free or at very low prices. The grains and agricultural food is being sent to Russia and then sold either in occupied territories or in Russia at a very high price.

The difference of price in food between non-occupied territories and occupied territories of Ukraine is threefold, so you can buy a potato, for example, for 10 hryvnias in Kyiv, and for 30 hryvnias or more in Kherson, which is occupied. They are basically cheating people, and they're stealing grains and agricultural food.

What I can tell you? Civilians are not controlling occupied territories. Soldiers are making money by stealing agricultural products from the people who harvest it by hand.

On the fields, we have farmers, and they are probably much younger, because this is a very profitable business in Ukraine. We are probably one of the few countries without subsidies for the agri-

cultural businesses because it's profitable. Many young people turn to agribusiness, because they can make a lot of money out of it, bring new technologies, increase productivity and many other things.

We don't have a problem like you do in Canada. Most of our farmers are young, more or less young, and they have new skills. They travel around the world to get more skills to put into the Ukrainian agricultural sector. The Ukrainian agricultural sector is three to four times less productive than yours or that of the U.S., so we have a long way to go to increase productivity and to make even more money for young farmers in Ukraine.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. MacGregor and Ms. Klymenko.

We're going to move to our second round of questioning, with five minutes for the Conservatives, five minutes for the Liberals and two and a half each for the other parties.

Mr. Falk, please go ahead.

Mr. Ted Falk (Provencher, CPC): Thank you very much to all of our witnesses for your presentations and for the very excellent information.

Ms. Klymenko, I'd like to get back to you as well. You made some comments early on in your presentation about where you thought the origins of this crisis were created. I'm very curious if you could expand on that a bit. You said that this has been a planned food shortage and also a planned immigration.

Can you tell me where these things are being planned from your perspective and vantage point?

Ms. Yulia Klymenko: From our experience, we have been at war with Russia for eight years. It didn't start 100 days ago. It's been eight years of war, starting in the eastern part of Ukraine. We are already very experienced warriors. We understand that Russia is not fighting us only with military forces. It's fighting us with cyber-attacks, destabilizing the political situation and many other means. You are now seeing that it is also fighting with civilized countries by weaponizing food and energy.

The result of the food crisis will be migration. There will be a large amount of migration and a lot of migrants, because hungry people will first try to change their governments and that will lead to unrest, and then they will go to the lands and countries that can provide food for their kids. This is obvious. People will seek to escape famine. They will need to feed their kids. They will go somewhere, probably to more developed countries in Europe and North America or other countries.

People in Africa and Asia will not have another choice, other than looking for food in other countries, unfortunately. This will result in a migration crisis. That's our prediction from what we can see from the inside. We can see that the Russian war is not only about military operations, but it's about many other dimensions, and you have to be very careful about that.

• (1150)

Mr. Ted Falk: Okay.

Can you also explain a little further what the end game or what the perceived benefit of all this immigration would be? Obviously it's going to lead to some complications from a food supply source, but to what end is this being played out?

Ms. Yulia Klymenko: Probably people who will come will need schools and social support. They will need a social infrastructure. They will need more housing. They will need more teachers, etc.

We can see it now with the six million Ukrainians who have fled to Europe. The European social systems and their public services are overloaded by Ukrainians because Ukrainian kids have to go to school and to hospitals. You need teachers and doctors who are fluent in Ukrainian because otherwise you cannot teach Ukrainian kids. They don't speak Polish or the German language.

There are many other things in Europe. Yes, Europe has done very well with the six million. It was unexpected that they actually absorbed the people and are dealing with the six million Ukrainians who fled the war, but if 10 million or 15 million Africans or Asians come to Europe, for example, or to North America, you will need to provide these people with basic social needs and public services. You cannot just put them into the streets.

That will burden the social system.

Mr. Ted Falk: Yes.

Just for clarification, is it your understanding that the intent is to overwhelm the social systems of the European countries?

Ms. Yulia Klymenko: I'm sorry. Can you...?

Mr. Ted Falk: Do you believe that the intent of all this is to overwhelm the social services of all these European countries?

Ms. Yulia Klymenko: No, the intent is political destabilization because social problems will lead to what we saw happen with Merkel, for example, and the main argument against the German government was an immigration crisis—

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Klymenko.

Thank you, Mr. Falk. We're at time.

We're now going to turn to Mr. Baker.

Let me just say, Mr. Baker, I know there are other parliamentarians other than you, but as the chair of the Canadian-Ukrainian interparliamentary association, we certainly appreciate your advocacy. We appreciate your being here today to ask questions. I think it's appropriate.

You have five minutes.

Mr. Yvan Baker (Etobicoke Centre, Lib.): Thanks very much, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, to you and the members of the committee, for having me on the committee today. It's a real honour to be here.

As the chair was just saying, I'd like to say to our witnesses before I ask my questions, that I am the chair of the Canada-Ukraine Parliamentary Friendship Group, which is a group of members of Parliament of all parties.

MPs in our Parliament, as in your parliament, disagree on many things. In fact, in some cases it feels that perhaps we disagree on everything sometimes, but we are united on Ukraine so I want you to know that. I want to thank my colleagues of all parties for their unity and their strength and all that we're doing together to support the Ukrainian people.

Obviously the war in Ukraine is an existential crisis for Ukrainians. It's a humanitarian disaster with Russia committing genocide. The Canadian Parliament has proclaimed unanimous support for that declaration. It's a threat to global security and Canada's security, and it's of course a threat to the food supply around the world, as we've been discussing here today.

You and your people are not just fighting for Ukraine, but you're fighting for all of us, so we need to fight for you. Know that Canadian MPs of all parties are fighting for you.

I'd like to start by asking Ms. Bogonos a question, and I would ask you to be as brief as you can because I have a few other questions left.

What is the potential humanitarian impact of Russia's weaponization of the food supply? How bad could this be for the international community, for people around the world?

• (1155)

Dr. Mariia Bogonos: We already see the results in Ukraine because Ukrainian salaries are lower, the food prices are much higher so we have lower affordability of food in Ukraine.

Globally we have wheat prices, for example, that increased starting from February 25 by about 30% to 40%. The countries that are sensitive, like Egypt or Yemen or Bangladesh, were already suffering from the higher prices before the war. Now they will need additional policies or they will need additional humanitarian support in order to provide wheat or grains for their people. This will either put a tremendous burden on their budgets or the people will start being hungry.

Mr. Yvan Baker: Thank you very much.

I'd like to switch to Ms. Klymenko, if I may.

You said, earlier in the meeting, that Russia has offered to allow some food exports in exchange for a reduction of international sanctions against Russia. I was on Ukrainian 24 TV last night, and I was asked about this. Today, you said the world should not agree to this, which is what I said last night.

Why should the world not agree to this?

Ms. Yulia Klymenko: Because it's blackmailing.... Maybe that's a very short answer, but it's really blackmail. It's a violation of any and all international rules and order. You cannot, first, purposefully block ports, then allow two routes and ask about the lifting of all sanctions.

Next time, they will come and block the Baltic countries, and they will say, “Okay, we need \$10 billion, then we will unblock it.” It’s blackmail. It’s criminal behaviour. You cannot accept it if you want to have worldwide rules and order, with people respecting international laws and order. You have to punish such blackmailers. You cannot agree to this blackmail. We need to find other ways besides the lifting of sanctions.

I think the routes are a temporary solution. Routes with UN convoys will allow us to export, but the most sustainable way is with heavy weapons.

Thank you for your support. I’m from the opposition, actually, but we are united in Ukraine because we understand we have one enemy. We have to fight this beast first, and then we will argue about other things inside Ukraine as opposition and ruling parties, so thank you for your support.

Mr. Yvan Baker: Mr. Chair, do I have any time left?

The Chair: You have about 30 seconds.

Mr. Yvan Baker: Lastly, Ms. Klymenko, and quickly, every time we’ve asked you what you need, you’ve said, “weapons”.

What happens if Ukraine does not obtain the weapons it needs from the international community?

• (1200)

Ms. Yulia Klymenko: The war will be long. We will not agree on any capitulation or concession of our territories. It’s impossible, so the war will be long and bloody. Unfortunately, the destabilization of politics, and of food and energy security, will increase worldwide. The best way to solve all these problems—food, energy and other security—is to stop the war. For Ukrainians to stop the war, they have to win the war.

I can add to my colleague. I’ve heard The Economist say that 1.6 billion people are already influenced by this food crisis in different proportions. Some people are eating less. Some are eating less because of the high prices, and some of the people hunger. However, 1.6 billion, according to The Economist are now suffering from this crisis.

Mr. Yvan Baker: *Duzhe dyakuyu.*

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Klymenko.

Thank you, Mr. Baker.

[Translation]

Mr. Perron, you have the floor for two and a half minutes.

Mr. Yves Perron: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Once again, I thank the witnesses for coming.

Mr. Amosov, you mentioned in your opening remarks that we absolutely must find a way to export Ukraine’s grain.

Ms. Klymenko spoke to us several times about weapons.

I also noticed that there might be a problem of compatibility between the railways.

What can you tell us about this, Mr. Amosov?

[English]

Mr. Mykhailo Amosov: Thank you for the question.

I agree with Ms. Klymenko that the only way to export enough grains and food abroad is via seaports. Unfortunately, our railway is not accessible and there’s not enough railway capacity to export so much grain—20 million tonnes of grain in Ukraine. We should do it through European countries, such as Poland, Lithuania and even the Netherlands. It will be a much longer logistical chain than before. It will be much more expensive and take much longer. The best way is to unblock Ukrainian seaports now.

[Translation]

Mr. Yves Perron: Thank you very much.

Dr. Bogonos, would you like to answer this question as well?

[English]

Dr. Mariia Bogonos: Yes. The logistics problem in Ukraine, as correctly noticed by Mykhailo, is huge indeed. The width of the railways in Ukraine and the European countries is different. That’s why, in order to transport through western borders, the grain needs to be unloaded from the Ukrainian wagons and put on the western machines in order to be transported further. This is problem number one.

A related problem is that the capacity of our common checkpoints at the borders does not always allow for such a procedure. The checkpoints with such facilities are limited, which puts additional limits on the capacity of the Ukrainian railway to transport the exports. This is problem number two.

Problem number three that we can point to is the capacity of the European ports to store Ukrainian grain. European ports have the facilities for the usual amount of grain that has been transported, plus certain additional storage. Now, this huge amount that can come from Ukraine is simply...there is very limited space to store it.

Ukrainian farmers have started investing in buying older storage in Europe. Of course, those producers who can assemble money to buy them try to put additional investments into buildings and storage in Europe, but this is a huge investment for them and not everyone can afford it.

[Translation]

The Chair: Thank you, Dr. Bogonos.

Thank you, Mr. Perron.

Mr. MacGregor, you have the floor for two and a half minutes.

• (1205)

[English]

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: Thank you, Chair.

Ms. Klymenko, I would like to go back to you. You have very much identified—all of our witnesses have—the importance of securing safe passage from the port of Odessa through the Black Sea.

One of the problems is that we know Russia is engaged in criminal acts here. We know they are engaged in blackmail. The problem is that Russia has a permanent seat on the UN Security Council, which often hobbles that organization's effectiveness. What I want to know is.... In the Black Sea, you have major neighbours. You have Turkey, Bulgaria and Romania. Do you have any intelligence on what their naval forces are doing?

Outside of continuing to support Ukraine with heavy weapons, what does Canada need to do to push with international allies to try to secure that passage? Do freighters need naval escorts, etc.?

I would like to know in what practical terms we may have to work with the knowledge that Russia is going to try to block us at every turn.

Ms. Yulia Klymenko: We understand that Russia is blocking the UN and other international organizations. There are a lot of Russians not only in the UN but in MAGATE, which is the nuclear organization, etc.

We see these hidden links all the time. That's why we're systematically fighting against the presence of Russian employees and officials in international organizations. I'm doing it very carefully. I know all of them and I'm trying to take them out of these organizations, because they are heavily influencing decision-making, unfortunately. We can see it in infrastructure and other areas.

What you can do is jointly send a letter, make a decision in your committee or vote in Parliament to join these efforts of the convoys. They would not only be UN convoys, but U.S. and Canadian convoys. That will allow us to take grain out through the ports. This is the only sustainable and cheap way to do it, because if we go through the European ports and the European railways, etc., the price will increase because the logistical costs will be increased dramatically on the wheat. It's a commodity. Commodities are very sensitive to logistics. That's why.... The logistics cannot cost more than the price of the wheat.

I think you could join that, but my colleagues from the embassy or from the international committee will probably better understand what the practical tools are in the UN and other organizations to help with these routes. I will come back to you after our meeting. I'm not a specialist in these political international organizations.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Klymenko. Thank you, Mr. MacGregor.

Colleagues, that does it. We actually ran a little bit over time but I think the testimony was that powerful. I was giving a little bit of leeway to make sure that we could have full answers.

On behalf of all my parliamentary colleagues to our witnesses, Ms. Klymenko, Ms. Bogonos and Mr. Amosov, thank you so much for agreeing to participate in the study and for being able to provide that important testimony. As has already been mentioned, we stand with you. We appreciate what you've had to inform us as Canadian parliamentarians here today, and indeed I'll give one final shout-out

again to our Ukrainian interns on the Hill, many of whom have joined us in person for this proceeding.

Ms. Yulia Klymenko: Thank you too. Thank you for your help and support.

The Chair: Colleagues, we're going to take just a two-minute break. We are going to bring in the next panel, so please don't go far.

• (1205) _____ (Pause) _____

• (1210)

The Chair: Colleagues, we're back. Thank you to our entire team for helping transition very quickly.

Our second panel for the second hour for the start of our study is joining us by teleconference today.

We have Paul Hagerman who's the director of public policy at the Canadian Foodgrains Bank. We have Maud Labat, trade counsellor, trade and economic section at the Delegation of the European Union to Canada. We have Maximo Torero Cullen who is the chief economist at the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations.

Thank you so much to all the witnesses for their participation today.

Colleagues, we do have a procedural vote that is upcoming. We have the ability to not necessarily break at that time. I believe I have unanimous consent in the room to continue through the bells, and indeed I've talked to all of our colleagues. I think the preference is to vote by application such that we will stretch it as close as possible, given that we have these wonderful witnesses before us.

With that, I'm going to start with Ms. Labat.

You have five minutes for opening remarks.

Ms. Maud Labat (Trade Counsellor, Trade and Economic Section, Delegation of the European Union to Canada): Thank you very much.

Honourable members of Parliament, it is an honour for me and indeed for the European Union to contribute today to your reflection on the impact of Russia's illegal invasion of Ukraine.

This unwarranted invasion of Ukraine by Russia has once again shown how like-minded the European Union and Canada are in their assessment and in their reaction to the crisis. The European Union, like Canada, has adopted several sanctions packages against Russia, Russian entities and Russian nationals who support this war. The European Union, like Canada, is in parallel assessing the severe consequences that this war is having on the world, including on global food security.

In my remarks today, I will present three main points, first, our assessment of the situation in the European Union; second, our response; and third, how Canada as a like-minded country forms an integral part of the EU's response.

First of all, our assessment of the war in Ukraine in general is that this is really a man-made crisis and that Russia's threats and actions prove that Russia is using food, as it is using energy, as a geopolitical weapon, disregarding the lives and the well-being of people in Russia, in Ukraine and elsewhere. This war in Ukraine endangers the food security of millions of people around the world, and it is already affecting people in many countries. The first victims are obviously vulnerable populations around the world, particularly in low-income countries that depend on food and fertilizer imports.

This invasion is driving food prices up due to the increased cost of production, transport and freight insurance. Fertilizer prices have soared, including in the EU, and severely restrict their affordability for smallholder farmers in developing countries and in the EU.

Russia has also destroyed substantial food stocks production, as you heard earlier, as well as processing and transport capacities in Ukraine. We believe that the Russian military is deliberately targeting the Ukrainian agriculture sector. When Russia bombs Ukrainian fields and destroys and loots food storage, and when Russian warships block Black Sea trade routes, it not only affects Ukrainian wheat and grain exports. It also directly negatively impacts the daily lives of people in Africa and Asia.

As you heard before, the numbers may be a bit different, but our assessment is that Ukraine accounts for 10% of the world wheat market, 13% of the barley market, 15% of the maize market and over 50% of the world's sunflower oil market. We estimate that 49% of winter wheat, 38% of rye and 63% of corn to be harvested this summer is situated in zones that are at risk. Between 20% and 30% of the areas under winter cereal, maize and sunflower seed production in Ukraine will either remain unharvested or not be planted this spring. The consequence of this is that food is missing or becoming very expensive.

Some grain-producing countries are introducing export quotas. In addition, Russia, Belarus and China have announced export restrictions or bans on fertilizers and fertilizers' components, and the European Union, of course, is vigorously opposed to such trade restrictions.

Now, for us in the European Union, there is no immediate threat to food security because the European Union is a big producer and a net exporter of cereals, but the immediate impact rather lies in the increase of costs throughout the food supply chain and in the disruption of trade flows from and to Ukraine and Russia, as well as the impact on global food security.

If you take the EU's neighbourhood in North Africa and in the Middle East, both availability and affordability are at risk in wheat, which is their basic food staple. The same is true in sub-Saharan African and in Asia.

The European member states meeting in Versailles in mid-March 2022 called upon the European Commission to take urgent action to present options to address the rising food prices and the issue of

global food security. On March 23, the European Commission adopted a communication on safeguarding food security and reinforcing the resilience of food systems.

Let me briefly take you through the actions that this communication sets out.

First, it presents our immediate actions to safeguard food security in Ukraine and around the world.

Second, we addressed the challenge of food stability in the EU food system with a range of measures to support our farmers and maintain affordability for our citizens.

● (1215)

Finally, we confirm the European agenda to make our food system sustainable and resilient for the years to come.

In the interest of time, I'll only cover the first two points, but I'm happy to answer questions about the rest.

Helping third countries and, of course, Ukraine—

The Chair: Ms. Labat, I apologize. We're actually at five minutes. I want to give you a bit more time, but I know that my colleagues are going to want to ask so many questions, so perhaps we'll tee them up accordingly when we get around to that.

Mr. Torero Cullen, you have up to five minutes.

Dr. Maximo Torero Cullen (Chief Economist, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations): Thank you very much, Excellencies and other honourable members of the committee.

What I want to raise first is that, based on our global food crises report released on May 4, already in 2021 around 193 million people were in crisis, which means IPC 3 or above. In this dramatic context, we now face the war in Ukraine.

The FAO sees three major types of risks for global food security. These are derived from the direct effects of the conflict upon global food and agriculture; those that are related to macro and cross-cutting factors; and those related to humanitarian risks, which, of course, are the humanitarian risks we see in Ukraine.

The macro impacts or the level of indebtedness of countries at this point—the poorer countries—and also the linkage between energy prices and fertilizers have put a significant risk into the agricultural sector that we didn't have before. As we all know, both Ukraine and the Russian Federation are important players in the global commodity markets, and the uncertainty surrounding the conflict prompted a significant further price increase in global markets, particularly those of wheat, maize and oilseeds. This increase came on top of already high prices driven by robust demand and by high input costs because of the COVID-19 recovery.

In March 2022, the food price index reached its highest level since its inception in 1990. The FAO food price index for May fell very moderately for the second consecutive month—it dropped only 0.6% from April—and this decline was mainly due to drops in the price indices of vegetable oils and dairy products, each falling by 3.5% month to month. By contrast, the cereal price index rose by 2.2% from April, reaching an all-time high and surpassing the March 2022 peak. The meat price index also increased, but very modestly, by 0.5%.

Export forecasts for wheat for both Ukraine and the Russian Federation were revised since the start of the conflict, and other market players, most notably India and the European Union, increased their exports. This partially compensated for the exports lost from the Black Sea region, leaving a relatively modest gap of about three million metric tons in the case of wheat.

The impact of the current crisis was significant for wheat-importing countries that were highly concentrated on Ukraine and the Russian Federation. Countries that are heavily reliant on wheat imports include Turkey and Egypt but also a number of sub-Saharan countries, including Eritrea, Somalia, Madagascar, Tanzania, Congo and Namibia. These countries need to identify new suppliers, which could pose a significant challenge, at least in the next six months. Also, of course, northern Africa and some countries in South Asia were significantly dependent on the imports of wheat from Ukraine and the Russian Federation.

While wheat is an important staple in North Africa, it is not necessarily an important foodstuff in sub-Saharan Africa, with some exceptions, although the food price import bill has increased because there are also inputs for feedstocks. Also the oilseeds have increased significantly the level of the food-importing bills of these countries. Despite this, there are food crisis countries represented here, which are also partly dependent on the imports from these two countries. Countries which are in emergency today were also import dependent on these countries.

Maize exports from Argentina, the U.S.A. and South Africa were forecasted to increase. Overall, the level of gap that we have today is around eight million metric tons. Maize export prices surged in March to their highest level on record in response to the abrupt suspension of exports from Ukraine, and maize prices fell a little bit later in April, but very slightly, keeping to the highest levels that we have to date. Of course, in global oilseeds, Ukraine and the Russian Federation export around 63% of global oilseeds, putting significant pressure also on India's market.

One very important topic is fertilizer prices, which have also increased significantly, and fertilizer affordability has decreased sig-

nificantly. This is a reflection of the increase in gas prices and also of the export restrictions by the Russian Federation, which is the first exporter in the world of nitrogen, the third of phosphorous and the second of potassium. Key cereal and high-value commodity exporting countries like Brazil, Argentina, Bangladesh for rice, and others are import dependent on fertilizers from the Russian Federation, with levels that vary between 70% to 20%.

Moreover, the primary challenge for Canadian and U.S. farmers is the price of fertilizers. Soaring natural gas prices have pushed up the cost of nitrogen-based fertilizers, such as ammonia, which jumped from \$700 a metric ton in August 2021 to more than \$1,600 in May 2022. The price of potash, rich in potassium, has also also hit records of above \$1,100.

What we are observing here is not only putting a challenge on food access but also putting a huge challenge on food availability, which is our major concern for the next year, for 2023. Not only that, but we are seeing levels of export restrictions that are around 17% ,or a little bit more, of all the calories being traded. This creates a significant challenge, in addition to the increase in oil prices and diesel fuel, which have increased substantially, and also in kerosene in many countries in Africa at this point.

• (1220)

All these situations have put us in the position where we need to react quickly to minimize the potential risk that countries are facing. We need to, first, support the ability of Ukraine to farm, harvest and export. We need to provide humanitarian assistance to the country. We also need to refrain from imposing export restrictions and recommit to AMIS, so that we have more transparency. We need to ensure that any measures taken to address the crisis do not exacerbate food insecurity but, on the contrary, increase resilience. Finally, we need to actively identify ways to make up for the potential future gaps in global markets and work together to foster sustainable productivity increases where possible to avoid, as I was saying before, a problem with food availability in 2023.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Torero Cullen.

We'll now move to Mr. Hagerman for up to five minutes.

It's over to you.

Mr. Paul Hagerman (Director of Public Policy, Canadian Foodgrains Bank): Thank you.

The food crisis that the previous two witnesses have so adequately and so well described is not new. This is almost a repeat of what happened in 2008 with food prices becoming sky-high, countries putting on export restrictions and millions of people forced into poverty. At that time we saw that infant mortality rose. In order to go to work, people pulled their kids out of school, and there were food-related riots in dozens of countries. This happened 14 years ago. The causes were slightly different. It's happening again now. This should be no surprise, because there are problems with the global food system.

One of the biggest problems is that many developing countries have been relying on food imports instead of building up their own agriculture. An example of this is that across Africa, the average yield of corn is only one to two tonnes per hectare. Compare that with 10 tonnes per hectare in Canada. There are lots of opportunities to increase yields and to increase productivity in developing countries, but the investment has not been there.

One of the reactions to the food crisis in 2008 was that the G7 and other countries agreed to invest billions of dollars in food security in developing countries to address what they referred to as a decades-long lack of investment. Canada doubled its aid for agriculture at that time. Unfortunately, that priority lasted only three years. By 2013 the aid dollars had dropped back down to their pre-crisis levels. In developing countries, the crop yields remained low, livestock diseases took a toll, and the brightest young people saw their future anywhere except on the farm.

In 2008 the crisis was caused largely by weather factors. This time it's being caused by Russia's invasion of Ukraine, but we're seeing the same thing, this low investment in agriculture.

I want to focus on what Canada can do to help developing countries, because that's what our expertise at the Foodgrains Bank is in. Our goal is to have a world without hunger. Last year we served nearly one million people in 33 countries through a program working with food assistance, nutrition, agriculture and livelihoods.

Your study is asking what the impact of global food insecurity is and what can Canada do. I won't repeat the numbers of people who are hungry—the previous witnesses did that very well—but let me remind you that those numbers are going up every month.

In Ethiopia, the cost of a food basket for a family rose by 64% between 2019 and March of this year. In Kenya, we're seeing that cooking oil has doubled in price. The commodity suppliers we go to used to guarantee their prices for six months. Now they guarantee them for only one or two months, if at all, because prices are so volatile. This means that Canada's aid reaches fewer people than before, even though more people need help.

People are making tough choices. Some are shifting away from protein-rich foods and just focusing on starch—rice and corn—and nothing else. It fills the belly, but family nutrition suffers. People pull their kids out of school. They borrow money at high interest rates. They sell their livestock. These things help in the short term, but they have long-term costs.

I have two recommendations for Canada to deal with this crisis now.

In the short term, Canada needs to increase humanitarian assistance, especially for food. Canada commits money for food assistance through an international treaty called the Food Assistance Convention. Our minimum commitment is the same now as it was nine years ago, even though the drop in the value of the Canadian dollar and the rise in food prices mean that money feeds only half as many people. Canada should bump up food assistance and consider something like pegging our food assistance to the food price index that Mr. Cullen talked about. As food prices rise, we give more.

Second is that, in the long term, Canada should focus more on agriculture and food security in the aid program and on helping developing countries become less dependent on imports. Our own organization, Foodgrains Bank, for decades has worked with tens of thousands of farmers across Africa, most of them with two hectares or less of land. From our own experience, we know that these small-scale farmers can significantly increase production. In fact, most smallholders can expect at least a doubling of yields in only a few years. That's more tons of grain grown in Africa. It's also better livelihoods for poor families, and it's improved climate resilience.

• (12:25)

Thank you. I'll end my comments there and await questions.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Hagerman. You're right on time. Well done. That's a gold star.

We're going to start with questions.

Colleagues, the bells may start, but as we agreed, we're going to go as far as we can. I will work with the clerk accordingly.

Mr. Epp, we'll go over to you for six minutes.

Mr. Dave Epp (Chatham-Kent—Leamington, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

As it is with Mr. Baker, this study and this war are personal. All four of my grandparents were born in Ukraine. I've been there three times.

Testimony in the earlier panel focused on grains and food and vegetable production from the Kherson, Zaporizhzhia and Melitopol regions. I've visited that area of the world three times and put my hands in the soil. This is very personal for me.

Also, in the interest of transparency, I worked with the Canadian Foodgrains Bank for five years prior to being elected.

Mr. Hagerman, it's good to see you again. I'd like to begin my questioning with you.

You mentioned that Canada has not increased its minimum commitment for food assistance for several years. Can you compare us to other countries in the world? How are other countries responding?

• (1230)

Mr. Paul Hagerman: Thank you.

The Food Assistance Convention, as I said, is an international treaty that has about 15 countries signed on to it. Canada is the third-largest contributor. The two biggest ones are the U.S. and the European Union. Both of those countries have made major increases in their commitments over the past several years. They're now giving 30% to 40% more than what they did nine years ago, when the convention began.

Canada's minimum commitment is flat. As I said, that's the minimum commitment. Canada usually gives higher than the commitment, but there's nothing to stop a future government from dropping down to that minimum level.

We're suggesting that Canada should peg its minimum closer to what it's currently giving. It wouldn't actually cost any more money. It's more of a political commitment to say that we recognize this need, and we'll contribute at this level and peg it to the food price index. Then, if food prices go up, Canada's commitment goes up as well, and we can continue to feed just as many people.

Mr. Dave Epp: Thank you.

Following up on that, you talked about Canada's ability to perhaps help other countries double and hopefully even triple their yields. I know from my own experience, some of that success in Ethiopia.

How do we do that? What's the process, and how can the Canadian government support those efforts?

Mr. Paul Hagerman: Thank you.

As I said, our own program at the Foodgrains Bank has a lot of experience in this. We've dealt mostly with methods called conservation agriculture—any Canadian farmer will know what I'm talking about—with minimum tillage and soil cover and crop rotations.

The principles are the same, whether you're dealing with a thousand hectares or half a hectare. The tools are different, of course. However, using conservation agriculture, we have worked in about a dozen African countries, with close to 100,000 African farmers. We find that it's a knowledge-intensive approach that doesn't require them to purchase a lot more inputs. Once they've learned it, then they can keep practising it year to year.

It often spreads to neighbours—what we call spontaneous adoption. People who were not even in touch with our extension agents are now picking up these techniques and passing them on. Yields increase by an average of two to three times. Sometimes yields increase by five times over a period of only a few years.

Conservation agriculture is one knowledge-based approach. We also have experience with a variety of others, and lots of other organizations have as well, such as agroforestry and associations between crops and livestock. Think about fish as livestock as well, so fish ponds and crops, etc. Intercropping between maize and

legumes helps them both. There are a variety of techniques that are knowledge intensive rather than input intensive, which can dramatically increase yields beyond that one or two tonnes per hectare and much higher than that.

Mr. Dave Epp: Thank you very much.

I have a question for Mr. Cullen, please.

We've talked about and we've heard much testimony around the impact in Ukraine on its citizens and its effect on other countries through its exports. Russia is the aggressor here. Russia is also a big agricultural powerhouse.

What third party countries are potentially also affected by Russia's involvement in this war either through curtailed investments...or aren't there any?

Dr. Maximo Torero Cullen: As I mentioned in my presentation, all the countries that are food import dependent on both the Russian Federation and Ukraine are affected. The ones most affected were the ones that were more than 50% import dependent on these two countries, especially North Africa, South Asia and other countries in Africa.

The problem is not only the import dependency. Part of it has been covered by other countries that have increased their supply and their exports. The problem is also the access to fertilizers. Given the importance of fertilizers, the access to fertilizers could be substantially affecting many countries that cannot produce what they were producing before. That's the bigger challenge that we're facing right now.

Mr. Dave Epp: Thank you.

I'd like to follow up with the question that much of the world is focused on, which is about biosolutions to some of the energy concerns that we have.

Given the crisis we have, can the world both address environmental concerns through continued growth in biofuels and continue to feed the world? Is our productive capability there?

• (1235)

Dr. Maximo Torero Cullen: You always have trade-offs in the decisions you make.

Biofertilizers still have a long way to go, so I don't think that will be the immediate solution. It's something that will progress over time.

Right now, if fertilizers cannot move faster... There is a possibility that they can move because they are not part of the sanctions. In the case of Ethiopia, one of the main successes is the use of soil maps, which have helped to increase efficiency in the use of fertilizers. We believe that's something that can be used very fast in many countries to reduce the waste in terms of fertilizers.

The blending of NPK has to match what you really need, which is the problem we face today.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Torero Cullen.

Thank you, Mr. Epp, for your line of questioning.

Now we have Mr. Drouin for six minutes.

Mr. Francis Drouin (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, Lib.): Thank you, Chair.

I want to thank the witnesses who took the time to come before our committee today.

My first question is for Mr. Torero Cullen.

You've mentioned that countries are trying to find new suppliers. We've heard from previous testimonies that, while we may be able to find new suppliers, they could be expensive because of transportation. Are you seeing this happening right now in the marketplace?

Dr. Maximo Torero Cullen: Yes, sir.

There's a significant problem in what we call the food import bill, which is the cost of what you imported before the problem—before the war—and what you import today. There are several dimensions that have substantially increased the food import bill of all these vulnerable countries. One is, of course, the prices, which have increased substantially. The second is the evaluation of the exchange rate, which also increases the cost of the import bill.

We are proposing to the IMF to develop what we call the food import financing facility. Essentially, we calculate the gap in the food import bill, we rank the countries by vulnerabilities and we identify the countries that are a priority because we want to minimize the potential risk of social unrest. For example, for Africa we are talking about \$9 billion, which will be the total coverage of 100% of the gap in terms of the food import bill. If you cover 10%, it will be \$0.9 billion. If this is a loan, the cost is minimal and basically can be covered with SDRs within the mechanisms that IMF has.

Yes, the food import bill has increased substantially. Just to give you an idea, in the case of Lebanon, the prices have multiplied substantially. The amount of food they import is around 40% less than what they used to import. That shows clearly how something that was supposed to be inelastic became elastic because of the crisis we are facing.

Mr. Francis Drouin: Obviously, we're starting to see reports of countries limiting exports or having export quotas.

What message would your organization deliver to those countries?

Dr. Maximo Torero Cullen: We have compared the level of export restrictions in the COVID-19 period, which were minimal, with 2007-08, which was around 70% of the traded calories. Today we are a little bit higher, at around 70.5% of traded calories.

Our position, together with the Agricultural Market Information System's position, is that we should avoid any export restrictions at this point. One clear example of doing that is what just happened in the food price index of FAO. The reason the food price index of FAO declined a little in the month of May was that Indonesia removed their export restriction on palm oil. The value of oilseeds is the one that decreased substantially.

It's essential to keep trade open and it's essential to avoid export restrictions.

Mr. Francis Drouin: Great. Thank you.

My next question is for Mr. Hagerman.

I want to thank your organization. I've known the work that you've been doing for a while. I've actually met my other colleague on the other side through the Canadian Foodgrains Bank.

Are you doing an analysis on the ground with your partners to see what can be done further? One recommendation you've made is to increase Canada's contribution to the Food Assistance Convention. Other than that, do you have any short-term solutions where your organizations can play a bigger role?

Mr. Paul Hagerman: Thank you.

In terms of short-term solutions, we're kind of struggling because we have committed program funds to help people in particular countries for food assistance, but we're finding that the dollars just don't go as far as they used to. We had x number of dollars to feed 3,000 families and now, because of the rising price of food, that money will only feed 2,000 families. We don't have another source of funds.

We're in the process of working with other civil society organizations or other humanitarian organizations in Canada to appeal to the Canadian public for funding. We expect an appeal to go out within the next few weeks looking for money from the public. We expect the Canadian public will be very generous, but it would be wonderful if we could match that with funding from government because we're kind of struggling to deal with the rise in prices and how we manage that.

• (1240)

Mr. Francis Drouin: Great. Thank you.

Finally, Ms. Labat, you've talked about a few things that the European Union was doing with the resolution passed on March 23. I want to touch base on point number two. You didn't have a chance to explain what they have done to help farmers, but you've said there was some help there.

Can you elaborate on that in about a minute? If you don't have time, I would ask you politely to submit it in writing to this committee.

Ms. Maud Labat: Absolutely, and I can certainly follow up in writing.

There have been a number of actions that have been proposed in this communication. I am assuming your question relates to the help that we're giving to farmers in the EU. That is a support package of \$500 million euros, so roughly \$750 million Canadian, and it makes use of our crisis reserve.

The idea is to support the European producers who have been most affected by the serious consequences of the war in Ukraine. It allows member states to provide additional financial support to farmers and to address market disturbances that come from both the increase in the input costs and due to the trade restrictions.

We have also accepted more advances of direct payments and triggered an exceptional and temporary derogation to allow the production of crops on fallow lands. Then we have called on member states also to take some measures such as reducing VAT—the equivalent of our HST—on prices of food so that food is, of course, less costly, but that's more for European consumers.

I'll be happy to follow up in writing, of course.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Drouin.

Thank you, Ms. Labat.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Perron, you have the floor for six minutes.

Mr. Yves Perron: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

First of all, I would like to thank the witnesses for being here today. We appreciate it.

Ms. Labat, I'll continue with you.

The previous panel urged us to make Ukrainian grain exports possible as a matter of urgency. How do you see that happening? How can Canada work with you to help in this regard?

Ms. Maud Labat: Thank you for the question.

The European Union has done several things, including establishing contacts with Canada.

Currently, the most important thing for us is to facilitate transit and trade. In other words, we simply have to manage these logistical problems and to get the production out of the country. In fact, I think the witnesses in the previous panel have already discussed this.

Also, the European Commission announced in May the establishment of solidarity corridors to help Ukrainian exports. As you heard earlier, one of the things is to get more freight and terminals, and more storage capacity, which would allow goods to be taken out of Ukraine. I could very well pass on this announcement to you.

We also have a section looking at how to improve connectivity between the European Union and Ukraine, because the connections and infrastructure are not equivalent, as was mentioned earlier. This is one of the first things we are doing in the short term.

The international institutions have adopted a very strong policy of denouncing the export restriction measures that have been taken. Other witnesses have also spoken about this. I think we're working very closely with Canada on this and on avoiding further restrictions, obviously. We're working a lot with the G7, with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, or FAO, and with the World Trade Organization.

I'll stop there, but if you have any follow-up questions, don't hesitate to ask me.

• (1245)

Mr. Yves Perron: Thank you very much, Ms. Labat. Your comments are very interesting.

Furthermore, you seem to offer a lot of assistance to your producers, even those who are out of area. Did I understand correctly?

Ms. Maud Labat: Could you clarify what you mean by "out of area"?

Mr. Yves Perron: During your discussion with Mr. Drouin, I understood that you had provided significant assistance to your agricultural sector to increase its production in order to compensate for the loss of Ukrainian goods on the market.

Did I understand correctly?

Ms. Maud Labat: Yes, we expect European producers to be able to increase their production. In the last five years, we have exported about 27 million tonnes of wheat per year. However, for the year 2022-2023, we expect to export up to 40 million tonnes, if the weather conditions are favourable, of course, which would be an important contribution to the world market.

Of course, as I just said, all this depends on the weather conditions, but also on the inputs, especially fertilizers. As other witnesses have said before me, the price of fertilizers has exploded in the European Union. I think it is currently over 280% of the normal price. So we'll have to see whether or not this possibility will materialize.

Mr. Yves Perron: Thank you very much.

Dr. Torero Cullen, in your introductory statement, you mentioned that we need to react quickly. You also talked about increasing productivity, but you seemed to have run out of time at the end of your five minutes. Do you want to add to your idea on this?

[*English*]

Dr. Maximo Torero Cullen: No, what I was referring to was that in the current situation, for this year, we have a problem with food access because of increasing prices, but our major concern is what will happen in 2023. That has to be resolved very quickly because of the crop calendar and because of the importance of fertilization right now. Fertilizer needs to be delivered. Despite the fact that we have truly increased efficiencies in the use of fertilizers, as I referred to, there is an urgency for countries that have a gap in the fertilizers they need to be able to resolve that as soon as possible.

As you are aware, the U.S. has clearly stated that they don't include fertilizers and food in sanctions, and they also have proposed the issue of letters to try to accelerate that process so that you de-risk the problem of moving the fertilizer out of the Russian Federation.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yves Perron: That's fine, thank you.

What could Canada do in this regard? What would your recommendation be?

The Chair: Please answer in 15 seconds.

[English]

Dr. Maximo Torero Cullen: Canada can always help. It's an exporter of fertilizers too, so Canada can help in that sense. Also, it's very important to find mechanisms in which fertilizers can be moved out and distributed to the countries in need. The main concern we have right now is with rice, because it's the time they need to fertilize before harvest, and that's what could create the problem with rice, which is the only commodity that is doing okay right now.

[Translation]

The Chair: Thank you, Dr. Torero Cullen.

Thank you, Mr. Perron.

Mr. Yves Perron: Thank you.

The Chair: Mr. MacGregor, you have the floor for six minutes.

[English]

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Ms. Labat, I'd like to start with you.

Our previous panel of witnesses included a Ukrainian member of Parliament and organizations that were in Ukraine. They really gave us an up-close-and-personal view of what's going on in that country. They all said that relieving the port of Odessa was incredibly important, and it was causing a very serious backlog. Their storage capacity is maxed out and that will impact whether they are able to seed and harvest the crop this year.

The EU has I think Romania and Bulgaria, which have coastlines on the Black Sea. I know that Turkey has been considered as possibly a future member of the EU, but it's also of course a member of NATO.

From the EU's perspective on efforts to secure safe passage from Odessa, which would be the most efficient way of relieving the storage crisis in Ukraine, but also of freeing up a lot of that food, can you maybe tell us a little bit about the EU's efforts in that regard, since you are so much closer in the neighbourhood and probably have a perspective that we as Canadian parliamentarians don't.

• (1250)

Ms. Maud Labat: Actually, the most recent calls have come from the president of Slovakia who has called for safe passages out of the port of Odessa, which could be safeguarded or guaranteed by Turkey or by the UN, as I understand it. So far, our efforts have focused on land passages and, precisely, since the port was blocked, we are trying to facilitate access through those solidarity lanes that I mentioned earlier to help Ukraine export its agricultural goods.

It is very complicated, because of the border crossings and the very long waiting times at the moment. We want to reduce those. We've called on EU market players to help with this crisis with additional vehicles, by setting up matchmaking logistic platforms and by creating one-stop shops in the member states for these solidarity lanes.

We've also asked market players to make additional rail slots available for exports and to try to remove bottlenecks. We've also worked with national customs authorities to accelerate procedures

at border crossing points, and we're also trying to make sure that we create additional storage capacity in the EU.

At the moment, it's really an effort at the land borders, as the port of Odessa, as you were saying, is blocked. There are ongoing discussions on how to help. As you know, the EU is not a military power, so at the moment, there are discussions on how to facilitate and how to safeguard, but we're not there yet.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: Thank you for that perspective.

For the Foodgrains Bank, Mr. Hagerman, you talked about two things that Canada can do. We as a committee can take it as a clear recommendation that the Government of Canada increase food assistance through the Food Assistance Convention, that we peg our assistance to the consumer price index and that we really step up to the plate.

On your second part, on helping developing countries become more independent, I guess to realize resiliency, can you talk a bit about Canadian agricultural know-how? Is it in equipment or is it in our expertise in planting? Can you go into a bit more detail and help this committee make a recommendation in that regard?

Mr. Paul Hagerman: First, I have one point of clarification. I was talking about tying the food assistance to the food price index, not the consumer price index. It's the food price index from the FAO.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: Thank you for that.

Mr. Paul Hagerman: To your actual question on Canadian expertise, there are parts of Canadian agricultural expertise that are valuable, but it's not so much equipment, because we tend to make big equipment for big fields. Most of the farmers, in fact, in developing countries have very small fields.

It's not so much things like equipment, but it's often questions of understanding soil biology, in which Canada is actually a leader and doing lots of research. If you think about the Global Institute for Food Security and the University of Saskatchewan, they've done tremendous work on soil biology, which is very transferable to developing countries.

Some of our work on value chains and processing, those things are very helpful regardless of the scale, more so than equipment per se. Even understanding how conservation agriculture helps soil biology and how it helps water use, those kinds of things, can be quite helpful, and they transcend the question of scale.

• (1255)

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: Thank you very much.

The Chair: We'll have to leave it there, Mr. MacGregor. Thank you, and thank you, Mr. Hagerman.

We're going to go to the second round colleagues. I'm going to do my best to get us through.

Mr. Hoback, you have three minutes.

Mr. Randy Hoback (Prince Albert, CPC): Thank you, Chair. What a great study, and it's relatively timely, for sure.

Dr. Torero Cullen, one of the first things I was going to ask you, which you mentioned earlier, was about Indonesian palm oil being put under a trade restriction. Do you see that as being more of an ongoing problem as you get into tighter supplies? How is that going to impact cooking oil around the world?

Dr. Maximo Torero Cullen: No, what I was referring to was that they had an export restriction that they removed. That's why the price of oilseeds went down. As you know, Indonesia is one of the key exporters of palm oil. You had sunflower exports restricted because of the war, which were around 67%. Any country, like Indonesia, that puts an export restriction will immediately increase the price.

The point is that this needs to be avoided to avoid prices going up, which really affects Africa because it affects not only cooking oil but all uses of oilseeds.

Mr. Randy Hoback: What products or commodities do you see having, possibly, the same types of responses throughout the next year? Where are we really short on in commodities?

Dr. Maximo Torero Cullen: In terms of wheat, one of the countries that responded positively and had an expansion index was India. It has now put an export restriction on wheat exports, although they already export around 4.5 million more metric tonnes than they used to in the past, which helped reduce the gap in wheat.

Our major concern is rice. If countries are not able to get the fertilizers they need, there could be an issue with rice. That was one major trigger in 2011, and in 2007-08. If you recall, rice has a very thin margin. Therefore, automatically, any export restriction will significantly exacerbate increasing prices. We need to avoid that happening with rice. Today, we have enough supplies. Let's hope they can get the fertilizers they need so that, next year, they also have enough supplies.

Mr. Randy Hoback: When it comes to protein for cattle feed and products like that, how do you see trade being handled, in light of what's going on?

Dr. Maximo Torero Cullen: Everything that happens with cereals affects feedstock. We have seen an increase in the cost of feedstock. Therefore, that's an increase in the cost of meat.

It's important to understand that the grain still in Ukraine, which they said is between 20 million and 24 million metric tonnes. The number has increased because there's less consumption locally. A significant share of that is not for human consumption. It is for feedstock. One option could be to find ways to store it and then later deploy it, so we avoid a bigger disruption in the market.

What is the concern? Assume that you move out all the grain for human consumption right now. When the gap for wheat is only three million metric tonnes and the gap for maize is eight million metric tonnes, you could also create the opposite problem for farmers. If your opinion is correct—that they will increase the yield sub-

stantially—it will affect the prices in a situation where the affordability of outputs is declining substantially because of the increase of fertilizers and other inputs.

We have to be very careful to understand what is there, how that should be moved out and how it should be handled to avoid a bigger distortion.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Torero Cullen.

Thank you, Mr. Hoback. That's three minutes.

Mr. Turnbull, it's over to you.

Mr. Ryan Turnbull (Whitby, Lib.): Thanks, Mr. Chair.

Thanks to all our panellists for being here today. I really appreciate their testimony and expertise.

I think that most of you, in your opening remarks, focused on or talked about supporting a more sustainable and resilient food system in the future, decreasing reliance on imports and supporting smallholder farmers.

Mr. Hagerman, I know you talked about how conservation agriculture can increase yields. You also said, in your opening remarks, that the problems we're experiencing today are not new.

It goes without saying that we need to respond immediately to the pressures the global food supply is under, given Russia's invasion of Ukraine. As we react to this crisis, though, do you share a concern that we may run the risk of further destabilizing our food system in any way?

I'll go to Mr. Hagerman first.

Mr. Paul Hagerman: Can I ask for clarification on that—further destabilizing our food system how?

Mr. Ryan Turnbull: It seems to me that, by reacting quickly to the current food system, we're likely going to have to do things that may run counter to the long-term objective of creating a more sustainable food system. Certainly, the smallholder farmers are not going to increase their supply immediately, in order to supply what the world needs right now.

Mr. Paul Hagerman: Okay. Thanks.

The global food system is a big ship. It takes a long time to turn it and make significant change. I referred to the 2008 food crisis. At the time, there was a recognition that there had been decades of underinvestment in agriculture. The G7, including Canada and others, put money into the system for three years. It didn't make significant changes.

I think we need to respond quickly, but whatever we do quickly is unlikely to shift things dramatically in the long-term food system until we start investing in agriculture in all of the countries currently so dependent on imports. In the short term, there is a big need, but it's not at risk of undermining the long term. We need to do that as well.

• (1300)

Mr. Ryan Turnbull: Thank you for that. I appreciate that.

Mr. Torero Cullen, it's over to you.

I'm wondering, based on any multilateral discussions that have happened, whether you can see any mid-term solutions that will alleviate the pressures we're experiencing right now in this global food security crisis. However, will those also increase our chances of building a more resilient and sustainable food system globally?

The Chair: Unfortunately, we're at time, Dr. Torero Cullen, but here's what I'll offer. We'll make sure that the clerk provides that question in writing, and we would ask for a response, if you're able. Certainly we would welcome your opinion on that.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Perron, you have the floor for a minute and a half.

Mr. Yves Perron: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Dr. Torero Cullen, I'm going to give you the opportunity to complete your answer to my question.

What can be done, concretely and quickly, to help in this situation? What is your main recommendation to the Government of Canada?

[*English*]

Dr. Maximo Torero Cullen: Right now I think, for the most vulnerable countries, it's urgent to implement the food import financing facility. The Government of Canada can support this through donations to SDRs at the IMF and support the IMF's implementation of this, because there are countries today that are running into huge stress that could end in social unrest if we don't act quickly this year.

Second, it's important to find ways to help in the delivery of fertilizers to the countries that right now are a priority because of crop culling.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yves Perron: Thank you.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Perron.

Thank you to all our witnesses. For your context, we have a procedural vote that is going to be happening in about five minutes, so that is what rushed us a little bit at the end. We did get a second round of questions in, and we certainly appreciate your being here.

Ms. Labat, I might not ask a question but for a comment. Mr. Drouin asked for the EU's perspective on some of the programs to

support farmers. Fertilizer was mentioned. I don't have the time to ask it of you, and these things don't happen overnight, but Canada is one of the largest, if not the largest, fertilizer producer in the world. What member states would particularly benefit from Canadian exportation in this domain? If that's something you could provide in writing, we would welcome that.

Otherwise, we will let you enjoy your day, and we sincerely thank you for your contribution to our study.

Colleagues, I have two quick pieces of business. One is the committee budget. Would someone please move that the budget be accepted? It was distributed, and I don't foresee our having any issue with that.

Mr. Dave Epp: I so move.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: Okay, I have unanimous consent.

The second piece is that on Thursday, colleagues, we are welcoming the minister of agrarian policy and food from Ukraine, the minister of agriculture in our contemporary aspect. I would like to be able to hold a press conference in the morning to try to draw attention to what we are doing. I think it's extremely important. The testimony we've heard today was important.

Mr. Drouin, I think you have a motion. I believe this should be pretty straightforward, because we've talked about it before.

Mr. Francis Drouin: Do we need a motion? If there's agreement, we can give you the—

The Clerk of the Committee (Ms. Josée Harrison): Can you read it into the record for the blues?

Mr. Francis Drouin: Sure. I move:

That the clerk of the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food make the necessary arrangements for a press conference to be held on Thursday, June 9, 2022; and that the committee be represented by the Chair.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: Thank you, colleagues, I appreciate it.

I think it's important that we all collectively continue to highlight the work that we're doing here. As Mr. Epp and Mr. Baker mentioned, this is personal for all of us.

With that, colleagues, I will let us adjourn for our vote.

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