

## Ukraine needs assurances on ports to ship grains, Italian PM says

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The Ukrainian government needs to be assured that its ports will not be attacked if grain shipments via the Black Sea are to be resumed, said Italian prime minister Mario Draghi late last week.

“We need to unblock the millions of tonnes of cereals that are stuck there because of the conflict. The United Nations’ and Turkey’s mediation efforts are significant steps,” Draghi said in a speech at an OECD ministerial meeting in Paris, adding that “we have to offer President Zelensky the assurances he needs that the ports will not be attacked”.

Any route to the resumption of exports from Ukraine through the Black Sea and the Bosphorus into the Mediterranean will require unlikely degrees of agreement and cooperation between Russia, the West and Ukraine. The lack of grain exports is harming both Ukraine and certain emerging markets – particularly Egypt, which depend to a significant degree on supplies of Ukrainian wheat.

Russia is claiming that the shipments are being prevented by mines planted by Ukraine in its own harbours (which Ukraine denies), while adding that many of the global supply chain problems are the result of the west’s own sanctions against Russia.

Draghi also noted that surging energy prices and rising food prices were contributing to higher inflation in rich countries, which was prompting central banks to raise interest rates.