

# Ukraine

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said. As they retreated, they placed mines in the farm fields.

Despite the dangers, farmers are still producing, he said. "They still go into the fields."

Grynshyn estimates 99% of the nation's farmers remain in Ukraine.

"They have secured their families, but they themselves have returned," he said.

It's hard to say how many have been killed because that information is not readily available, he said. Some farmers have been killed by mines in the fields, and others have died while serving in the army.

## Stolen crops

About 20% of Ukraine is occupied by Russia. In southern Ukraine, Russian administrators forced farmers to provide information about their farms, including all data and crop storage locations.

"When the farmers did this, in a couple of days, the commodities were just vanished," Grynshyn said with a Ukrainian accent. "So in fact they were asking for address where to steal it from."

Farmers were told they could plant a crop this year only if they signed papers giving 70% of their harvest to Russia, he said.

Civilians "are being tortured in the basements and police stations by Russians because they are active patriots," he said. "There are even moments that a Russian soldier stops a person in the street and says, 'Tell how great Russia is, how thankful you are, because if I don't believe you, I will kill you.'"

Grynshyn spoke with the Capital Press June 7 at Washington State University's Whitman County Extension office in Colfax.

The day of the interview, Grynshyn had heard of Russian troops stealing 11 rail cars of grain and taking them to Crimea, a territory Russia took from Ukraine in 2014. Two days later troops burned Ukraine's second largest grain terminal, which was filled with sunflower meal.

When leaving a village, Russian soldiers steal anything possible, Grynshyn said, including carpets, computers and livestock, which they tie to the top of military vehicles.

"At some point, I've heard you would not even be able to say whether it is a tank or armored vehicle, because there is so much packed on top of it," Grynshyn said.

In setting up farmer exchanges Grynshyn has traveled to the U.S. roughly 40 times. Upward of 400 Ukrainian farmers and representatives of agricultural businesses have visited the U.S. over the years through Grynshyn's 10-day program.

As part of the program, he's worked with Steve Van Vleet, a WSU Extension educator, since 2009. Van Vleet has also traveled to Ukraine to work with farmers there.

Seeking help for Ukrainian farmers, Grynshyn has been visiting his contacts in Europe



## WORLD TO REBUILD RURAL UKRAINE

Online: <https://www.wrru.org/>

and North America. He visited Washington state this month was headed to North Dakota, Canada and Wisconsin.

## Help offered

In Germany, a client and friend who is the largest sweet corn farmer in the nation hosted Grynshyn. The friend's daughter asked Grynshyn to give 1,000 euros she had raised in her school to Ukrainian farmers who are in need.

That led to the formation of the fundraising project, World to Rebuild Rural Ukraine, or WRRU, to help farmers. The website is <https://www.wrru.org/>.

WRRU will use the funds to rebuild farmers' homes and replace machinery and out-buildings that have been damaged or destroyed. They have no access to government programs or anywhere else to turn.

Those farmers who have lost a relative, have a sick or disabled family member or who have children are given priority.

Ordinarily, farmers would be first to help others in need, "but now they are at the edge of survival themselves," Grynshyn said.

Every 10th household has been destroyed, he estimated.

WRRU was formed two months ago, Grynshyn said, and hopes to raise funds exclusively to help farmers.

Van Vleet, with WSU Extension, is a WRRU ambassador. He said it's "deep in my heart," and not just because he's visited Ukraine several times to teach farmers and students there.

"We have to be able to support the Ukrainian people as a democratic nation that grows crops very similar to ours," Van Vleet said. "What would we do if it happened to us? We cannot allow Russia to win in Ukraine."

WRRU emphasizes transparency, Grynshyn said. Donations are made through the nonprofit organization LifeNets International, based in Batavia, Ohio,

whose website is <https://lifeness.org/>.

Victor Kubik is a LifeNets board member. His wife, Beverly, is the board president. Kubik said his parents were Ukrainian refugees after World War II and he still has family there.

"It is such a horrible situation over there," Kubik told the Capital Press. "Ukraine ought to be leaders in the world but right now they are under such oppression. ... It's an astounding crisis of humanity, of agriculture, of everything. We shake our heads as we see people being killed every day and the world being held hostage, blackmailed, with nuclear action."

Before aid is authorized, farmers must open their houses and farms to inspection by WRRU coordinators. Priorities are reconstruction of houses, greenhouses, barns or stables and replacing machinery or lost livestock.

WRRU will not provide cash.

"Aid is about the actual objects that are reconstructed or the machinery units or the farm animals, and no upgrade," Grynshyn said. "If the farmer had a tractor by Belarus (that is) 120 horsepower, he will not get a 350 horsepower John Deere."

WRRU's board of ambassadors — Van Vleet is a member — are "respectful" citizens from countries outside Ukraine who support the project and will approve the budget. Five project coordinators in Ukraine are responsible for all stages of reconstruction and finding third-party experts, if needed.

"Western Ukraine has enough labor, materials, bricks, cement, everything. All we need is money to start doing this job," Grynshyn said.

He hopes to partner with co-ops, service providers, suppliers and machinery companies, among others.

A company that makes a donation to WRRU can assign an ambassador, who will oversee how the funding is spent and has the right to veto decisions, Grynshyn said.

The project offers a free online update on the war, Ukraine's ag industry and exports and reconstruction efforts on the Zoom



**Stephen Van Vleet:**

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online video platform every other Friday. They are also available on YouTube. Project coordinators will provide updates to donating companies upon request, Grynshyn added.

## Current picture

Before the war, Ukraine's farms could feed up to 600 million people.

"We can feed about two populations of the United States," Grynshyn said.

Ukraine has similar soil and climate to Washington state, Van Vleet said. The country's top crops are corn, wheat and sunflowers.

About 20 million to 25 million metric tons of last year's crops are stuck in storage, Grynshyn said.

Ukraine had a total storage capacity of roughly 57 million metric tons, Grynshyn said. Russia has destroyed the biggest elevators, but farmers also had storage. About 30% to 40% of land is unavailable for planting due to the war, he said.

As of June 1, approximately 6.98 million people had fled Ukraine, and more than 7.13 million people were internally displaced as of May 30, according to the Central Intelligence Agency's World Factbook. At least 8,900 civilian casualties had been reported.

## Ukraine farming

Ukraine has about 375,000 square miles, making it slightly smaller than Texas. It has a population of nearly 44 million, according to the CIA.

About 71.2% of land is agricultural, with 56.1% arable, 13.6% permanent pasture and 1.4% permanent crops. About 16.8% is forest, and 12% is other.

Agricultural corporations work about 20% of the land, private farmers 45-50% and small or family farmers 25-30%, Grynshyn said. He said there are "millions" of the small farmers.

## Russia's invasion

Grynshyn calls the southern city of Kherson "Ukrainian California," because it produces vegetables, berries and watermelons. It had the biggest irrigation system in the former Soviet Union, and housed a university that developed irrigation technology.

Russian soldiers destroyed all paper and data at the university, he said, as well as attacking a seed bank in Kharkiv.

"Even Germans in World War II left it because they knew they would use it," Grynshyn said of the seed bank. "Russians burned it down. It proves they don't care about anything Ukraine."

## 'Everything is there'

Food and security in the world are changing beyond Ukraine, Grynshyn said.

"It's whether it stays the same, where ... human rights prevail and the law prevails, or the terrorists come into action and those who have more power start terrorizing their neighbors," he said.

Grynshyn believes weapons will allow Ukraine to fight back "to the last soldiers, and to the last square foot of our land — it's one of the two."

"How long it will take, how much we will pay in lives, in



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— Roman Grynshyn

infrastructure, I don't know," he said. "But the longer it lasts, the more consequences the world will feel, in all the factors, not only fuel or energy sources cost."

Grynshyn said he's asking U.S. farmers to pledge support for their peers in Ukraine.

"Unless we stand, the whole world will have a food crisis," he said.

The world cannot afford to do nothing about Russia's invasion of Ukraine, Van Vleet said.

"We have to address it now," he said. "Agriculture is what brings yourself out of depressions, recessions, war time. It's always been the solve."

Grynshyn and his family have refugee status in Germany. He "definitely" wants to return to Ukraine.

"Everything is there — my home, my business, my clients, my family," he said. "People in Ukraine respect and know me as the one who is bringing technologies to Ukraine. Right now, I am outside the country, but at the first ability, I will go back. ... After the victory, I will be the first to invite anyone willing to show how beautiful my country is."

Farmers worldwide know how to tackle the difficulties that Mother Nature brings to their fields, Grynshyn said.

"The difficulties and the damages that the human brought into the fields of Ukraine, this is much more devastating, much more dangerous," he said. "But Ukrainian farmers don't give up."

# Fire: Oregon forestry officials rate properties for elevated risk

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perfect," Shaw said. "There will be adjustments in the future. This is a great first step."

The Oregon Farm Bureau has worried about adverse impacts to agriculture since lawmakers began negotiating comprehensive wildfire legislation last year.

The Legislature ended up passing Senate Bill 762, which the Farm Bureau criticized for its "top-down" approach to wildfire mitigation. The group favored a "bottom-up" strategy of consulting with rural communities proposed in another bill.

To get the bill over the finish line, lawmakers eliminated SB 762's definition of wildland-urban interface, or WUI, and instead directed the Board of Forestry to set the parameters based on "national best practices."

However, the Farm Bureau and other critics believe the board's WUI criteria are nonetheless overly broad. The vast acreage likely included in the designation will leave people "shocked," said Lauren Smith, the group's director of government and national affairs.

"Our legislators will be very surprised when they start getting constituent calls," she said. "When you get a WUI that is nearly the size of the State of Oregon, it sort of defeats the purpose."

Properties will only be subject to regulation if they're both within the WUI and have a hazard rating of "high" or "extreme" wildfire risk.

Roughly 250,000-300,000 properties fall

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into the "high" and "extreme" risk categories, but ODF doesn't yet have an estimate of how many are also in the WUI.

The Farm Bureau expects a great deal of overlap, which will have a drastic effect on rural areas, Smith said.

"You'll see large swaths of entire communities pulled into high or extreme risk WUI," she said. "There's a lot of regulation going on focused on this map and all these rural communities, and not a lot of representation by them."

The defensible space regulations require fire-prone fuels to be cleared from 50-100 feet around certain structures, depending on the hazard rating.

It's not yet clear that cultivated cropland will be excluded from that requirement, with the matter currently being considered by Gov. Kate Brown's Wildfire Council,

Smith said. It's also unknown whether the requirement will apply to rural facilities, such as small hydroelectric plants.

"Nobody has been able to answer those questions," she said.

The State Fire Marshal's Office has exempted agricultural buildings uninhabited by people from the defensible space rules for vegetative fuels, though the Farm Bureau fears that could change under new leadership.

"We're sort of at the whim of that agency now," Smith said.

Over the longer term, areas subject to regulation will have to meet stricter building codes, adding expense to new or replacement dwellings, she said. "It's going to be harder to develop in these communities with these higher standards."

The Farm Bureau believes many instances of over-regulation could be prevented if the ODF crafted a narrower definition of WUI.

As it stands, the criteria applies to areas with at least one structure larger than 400 square feet per 40 acres, if more than half the surrounding land consists of vegetative and "wildland" fuels.

The Farm Bureau expects that rural properties will widely be swept into that definition by default, Smith said.

"If you don't have any other structures, what else is going to be on that land? Our anticipation is that's going to be most of rural Oregon," she said. "There are all sorts of unintended consequences when you start regulating at this scale."

# Groundwater: Regulators want stricter standards for Oregon

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in areas where the impact to aquifers is unknown — even before the new regulations are finished.

"It's concerning because the existing rules would seem to be the reason for the situation we're in," said Woody Wolfe, a farmer and commissioner.

That sentiment was echoed by Meg Reeves, a retired attorney and the commission's chair.

"I would be in favor of exploring what can be done in the interim," she said.

Waterwatch of Oregon, an environmental nonprofit, believes that current laws and regulations allow OWRD to "default to no" when wells are proposed in areas with limited groundwater data.

"We don't think there's any new process needed to do this," said Lisa Brown, the nonprofit's attorney.

Brown said her organization appreciates the OWRD's regulatory direction but urged the agency to act quickly.

"We're still seeing those default-to-yes issuances going through the system," she said.