

# A WEAPON CALLED HUNGER

## How Conflict in the Global North Exacerbates Food Insecurity in the Global South: A case study of the 2022 war in Ukraine

### INTRODUCTION

'The breadbasket of Europe' is a title aptly given to Ukraine as it is the world's fifth largest exporter of wheat (UNComtrade, 2022). Combined with Russia, the world's largest exporter of wheat, these two countries are responsible for 21.6% of the world's wheat exports. As many as 25 African countries are reliant on Ukraine and Russia for more than a third of their wheat imports; this number jumps to over half for 15 African countries (UNCTAD, 2022). The full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine has prevented the production and export of many Ukrainian agricultural commodities. The correlation between conflict and hunger has been well documented; however, the majority of this research has been devoted to explaining the correlation between conflict and hunger in the Global South. Thus, this research project will attempt to contribute to the limited body of research on the effects of conflict in the Global North on food insecurity in the Global South through using the 2022 war in Ukraine as a case study.

### METHODOLOGY

#### Methods:

- Secondary quantitative data collection
  - Data was primarily collected from the FAO, UNComtrade and the UN JCC.
- Longitudinal study

#### Measures:

- The Global South countries selected for study were determined on the basis of whether they had received wheat shipments under the Black Sea Grain Initiative. This requirement ensured there was consistent UN trade data available for each country for 2022/2023.
- Commodity: wheat
- Selected indicators:
  - % of total wheat imports from Ukraine and Russia over 5 year intervals
  - amount of wheat received under the Black Sea Grain Initiative
  - % of daily caloric intake wheat and its products account for
  - global price of wheat
  - Ukrainian wheat production
  - global freight costs
- These indicators were chosen because they each relate to one of the four dimensions of food security outlined by the FAO: physical availability of food, economic and physical access to food, food utilization, and stability of the other three dimensions over time.

### RESEARCH QUESTION

How does the war in Ukraine appear to be exacerbating food insecurity in the Global South?

### ANALYSIS

The war in Ukraine appears to be exacerbating food insecurity in the Global South in the following four ways:

- (1) physical availability of wheat has been severely reduced by production decreases in Ukraine (FAO, 2023). Additionally, global wheat stocks are at their lowest since 2016/17 (USDA, 2023).
- (2) economic access to wheat is impaired by soaring wheat prices as higher food prices affect the purchasing power and consequently the nutritional intake of the bottom billion people in poorer countries (Saad, 2013). Physical access to wheat has been undermined by Black Sea blockages by the Russia army. Before the war, 90% of Ukrainian agricultural exports were seaborne and 66.7% of wheat exports that left through Black Sea ports went to the Global South (CEU, n.d.). These blockages have resulted in over 20 million tons of physically available grain becoming inaccessible to the Global South as it is stuck in grain silos along the Black Sea, unable to leave Ukraine.
- (3) for countries where diets are less diverse and wheat and its products are utilized for a significant portion of average dietary energy requirements the nutritional status of individuals is more likely to be affected by reduced availability and access to wheat.
- (4) higher reliance on the foreign supply of food staples increases risks and price volatility which compromises stability and consequently food security (Bicchetti, Razo, & Shirotori, 2021).

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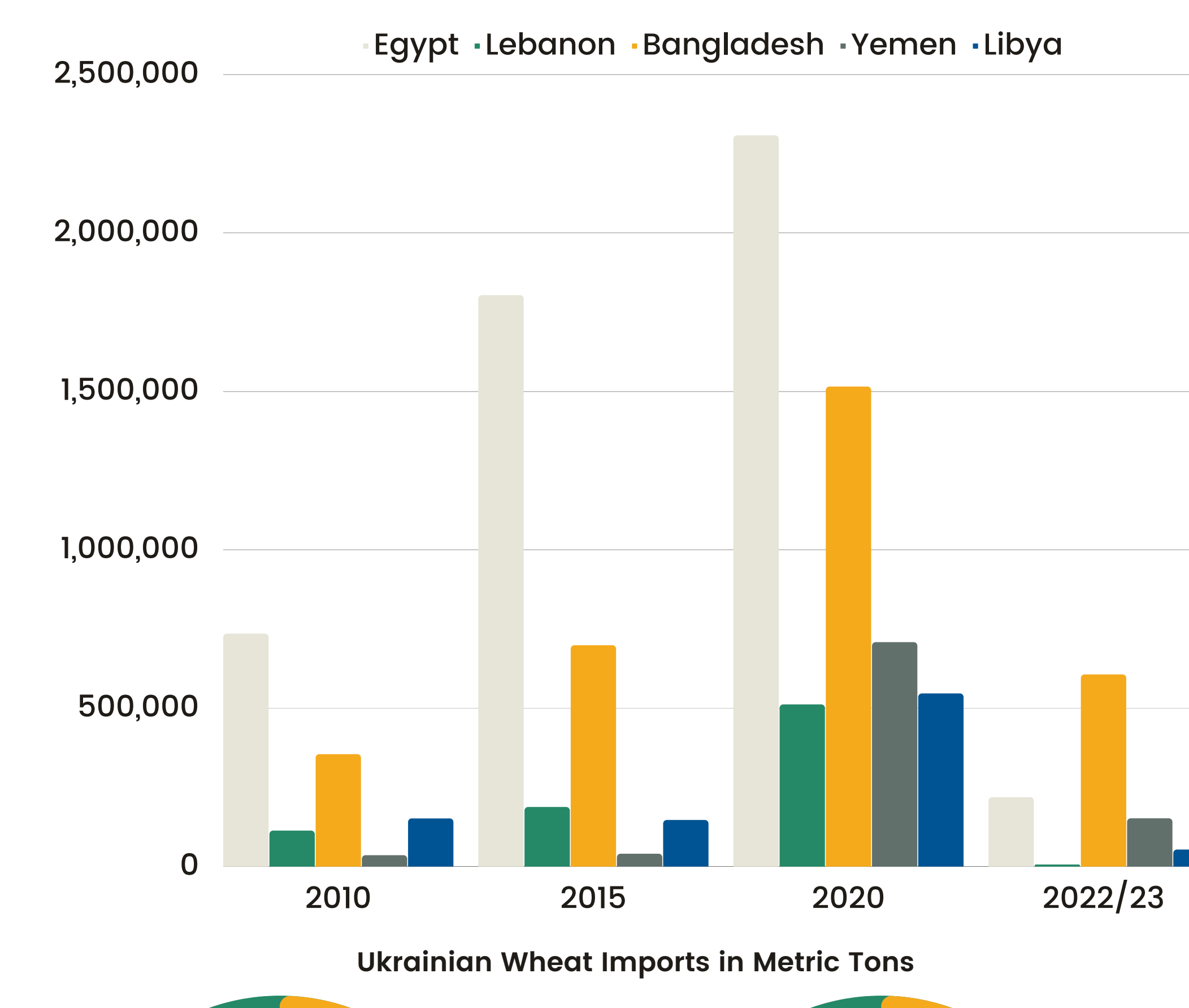
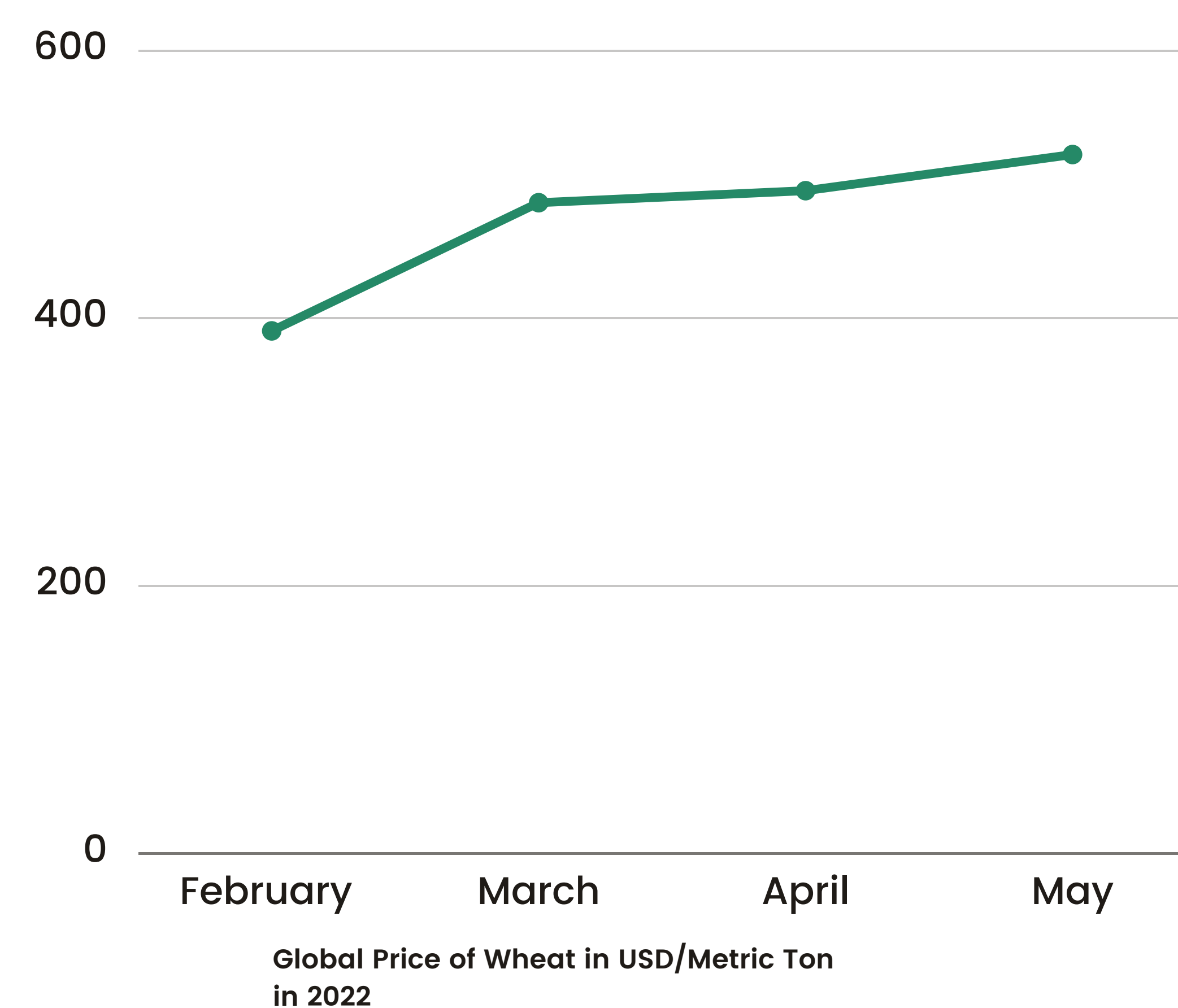
#### Affiliations

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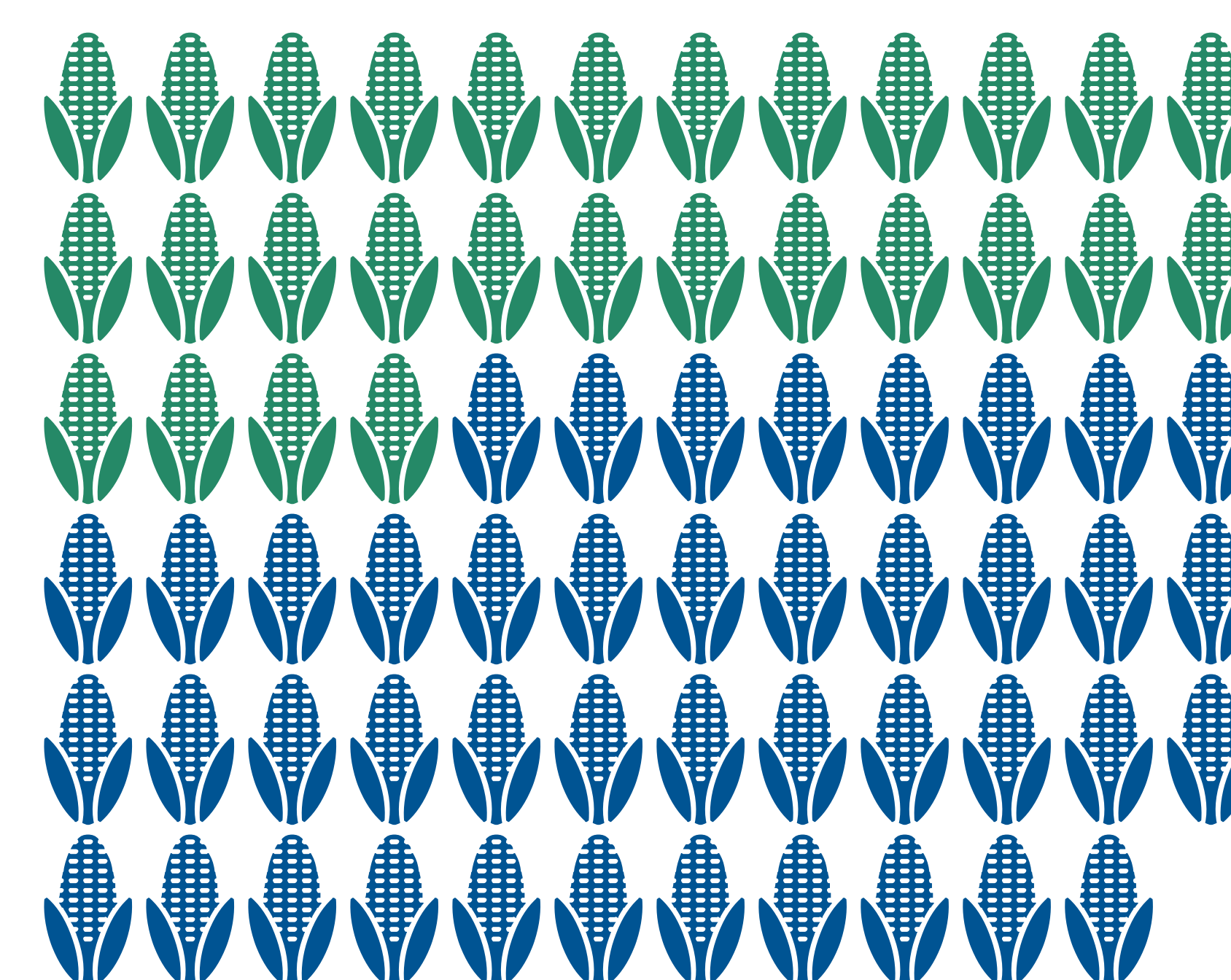
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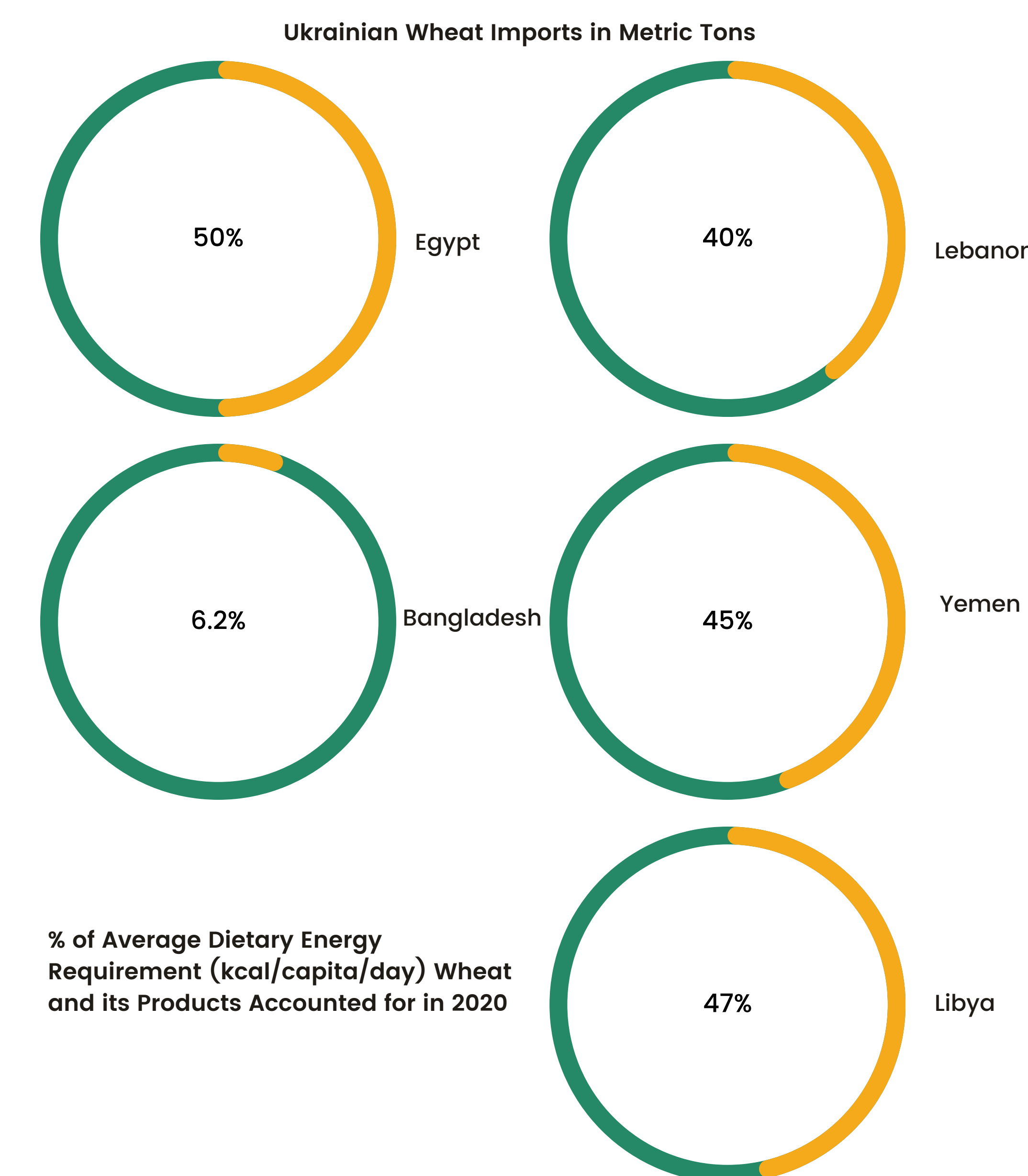
We acknowledge and respect the ləkʷəŋən peoples on whose traditional territory the university stands and the Songhees, Esquimalt and W̱SÁNEĆ peoples whose historical relationships with the land continue to this day.



### RESULTS/FINDINGS



In 2021 Ukraine planted 7, 099, 400 hectares of land with wheat. In 2023, there was a 40% reduction (represented in green) in the hectares of land planted with wheat.



### CONCLUSION

This research project sought to explain how the war in Ukraine appears to be exacerbating food insecurity in the Global South through using the four dimensions of food security outlined by the FAO as indicators for food insecurity. This research demonstrated that the physical availability of wheat and economic and physical access to wheat have been severely reduced due to the war in Ukraine. Additionally, this research suggests that Global South countries that are highly reliant on Ukraine for the supply of wheat and utilize wheat for a significant portion of their daily caloric intake will experience higher rates of food insecurity as a result of the war in Ukraine, such as Lebanon, than countries such as Bangladesh. In 2020, 81.2% of Lebanon's total wheat imports came from Ukraine and 40% of their average daily energy requirements came from wheat and its products. In contrast for Bangladesh, these numbers were 25.2% and 6.2% respectively. A national cross-sectional study in Lebanon on food-related habits following the war in Ukraine corroborated this assessment by revealing that 70.3% of households surveyed purchased less food than in the pre-war period (Yazbeck et. al., 2022). This research project was limited by the lack of consistent official data on food insecurity, trade balances, and production for 2022/23. However, this analysis starts to make explicit the effect of conflict in the Global North on food insecurity in the Global South and provides an avenue for further research.