

GLOBAL TRADE AND COMMODITIES BRIEFING

What Happens to Global Food Prices Every Time a War Breaks Out?

Six wars, six different effects on the price of food somewhere else in the world, and two that barely moved it at all.

Cross-referencing the FAO Food Price Index, the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification, UNICEF, the World Health Organization, and contemporaneous reporting on each conflict.

What's inside the full report

The complete report runs several pages and draws on eighteen primary sources. Here's the structure, plus the summary table it opens with.

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The clearest case, and why

Russia's invasion of Ukraine: the FAO index record, Ukraine's export shares, and the fertilizer price shock that followed.
- 2

How we picked these six

What "Moved the index," "Regional disruption," and "Off the index" actually mean, and why that split is not a severity ranking.
- 3

The complete six-war list

The 2026 Iran war, Houthi attacks on the Red Sea, Syria, Sudan, and Gaza, each with sourced figures and dates.
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Also worth watching

Yemen's own separate hunger crisis, and a historical footnote on wartime blockades.
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The caveat that matters most

Why the two worst humanitarian catastrophes in this report never moved a single global price index.

NO.	WAR	EFFECT	WHY IT'S ON THE LIST
1	Russia's invasion of Ukraine	Moved the index	Sent the FAO Food Price Index to an all-time record of 159.3 points in March 2022.
2	The 2026 Iran war	Moved the index	Closed the Strait of Hormuz and helped push the FAO index to a three-year high in July 2026.
3	Houthi attacks on Red Sea shipping	Regional disruption	Cut Suez Canal trade volume by about 40%, more than doubling some shipment times.
4	Syria's civil war	Regional disruption	Cut the country's wheat harvest by about 70% from its pre-war average.
5	Sudan's civil war	Off the index	UN-confirmed famine in two areas, without moving any global price index.
6	The Gaza war	Off the index	The territory's first UN-confirmed famine determination, in August 2025.

The full report also includes an interactive dashboard version of this table, comparing each conflict against the FAO Food Price Index, filterable and kept current as these situations develop.

EXCERPT FROM THE FULL REPORT

The clearest case: Russia's invasion of Ukraine

Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine on February 24, 2022 is the cleanest case in this report because the transmission mechanism is so direct. The FAO Food Price Index jumped to 159.3 points that March, its highest level since the index began in 1990, driven mainly by the cereal and vegetable oil sub-indices, which posted their own record highs the same month.

Russia and Ukraine together accounted for roughly a quarter of global wheat exports and a large share of global corn exports before the war, so a conflict between the two immediately put a meaningful share of the world's grain trade at risk. Ukraine's own export shares make the disruption easier to see: around 46% of global sunflower oil exports, 17% of barley, 12% of corn, and 9% of wheat passed through Ukrainian ports before the invasion closed them.

Fertilizer prices moved in parallel for a related reason: Russia alone supplied about 14% of the world's urea exports and 11% of its phosphate exports, and Russia and Belarus together accounted for around 41% of global potash exports. Bloomberg's fertilizer price index hit a record 1,270.4 points on March 25, 2022.

Continues in the full report, alongside the 2026 Iran war, the Red Sea, Syria, Sudan, and Gaza

GET THE FULL REPORT

This is a short taste of the complete briefing.

The full report covers all six wars in depth, the complete methodology, eighteen cited sources, and comes with a live interactive dashboard you can embed or share. Get in touch and we'll send it over, or talk to us about custom, continuously updated commodity and trade data for your own sector.

THE FULL PACKAGE INCLUDES

- The complete written report (Word and PDF)
- The interactive food-price-impact dashboard, filterable by conflict
- Full source list with 18 primary citations
- Custom data or refresh schedule, on request

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This preview reflects public research available as of August 2026 and presents conflict-related food security data as a factual synthesis, not a political argument about the causes or merits of any conflict described. Sources include the Food and Agriculture Organization, the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification, UNICEF, and the World Health Organization. Full citations are in the complete report.