

## War in Middle East creating fertilizer shortages

30th March 2026



The war in Iran has sharply increased fertilizer prices because it has disrupted shipping through the strategic Strait of Hormuz. Iran's near shutdown of the Strait is in retaliation for attacks by the U.S. and Israel. The Persian Gulf region is a critical supplier of fertilizer ingredients. Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Iran, and Oman are among the world's top exporters. The ongoing hostilities have resulted in around 30 to 40 per cent of the world's fertilizer trade being significantly disrupted. Farmers worldwide are having to pay up to 35 per cent more for fertilizer. Experts predict farmers will be planting fewer crops like corn, rice, and wheat, which will lead to lower yields and higher food prices.

The United Nations has stated that the crisis will cause a global food shortage. Carl Skau of the World Food Programme spoke about the impact the conflict might have. He outlined two scenarios, saying: "In the worst case, this means lower yields and crop failures next season. In the best case, higher input costs will be included in food prices next year." Maximo Torero, Chief Economist of the UN's Food and Agriculture Organization, said: "It is a systemic shock affecting agrifood systems globally." He added: "Farmers are facing a dual cost shock. They have more expensive fertilizers alongside rising fuel costs, affecting the entire agricultural value chain, including irrigation and transport."

Sources: [un.org](http://un.org) / [npr.org](http://npr.org) / [apnews.com](http://apnews.com)

### Writing

We should all grow as much food as we can for ourselves

### Chat

Talk about these words from the article.

war / Iran / fertilizer / shipping / retaliation / ingredients / hostilities / farmers / crops / United Nations / food shortage / conflict / food prices / fuel costs / irrigation / chain

### True / False

- 1) The article says fertilizer prices have disrupted international shipping. T / F
- 2) Persian Gulf nations produce much of the world's fertilizer ingredients. T / F
- 3) The article says farmers may have to use up to 35% more fertilizers. T / F
- 4) The article says farmers may plant less wheat and corn. T / F
- 5) The U.N. has warned of a possible global food shortage. T / F
- 6) The World Food Programme outlined three dangerous scenarios. T / F
- 7) The Food and Agriculture Organization said farmers will get two shocks. T / F
- 8) Rising fuel costs could affect irrigation. T / F

### Synonym Match

(The words in **bold** are from the news article.)

- |                       |               |
|-----------------------|---------------|
| 1. <b>disrupted</b>   | a. revenge    |
| 2. <b>strategic</b>   | b. whole      |
| 3. <b>retaliation</b> | c. harvests   |
| 4. <b>hostilities</b> | d. double     |
| 5. <b>yields</b>      | e. crucial    |
| 6. <b>shortage</b>    | f. instance   |
| 7. <b>scenarios</b>   | g. scarcity   |
| 8. <b>case</b>        | h. upset      |
| 9. <b>dual</b>        | i. fighting   |
| 10. <b>entire</b>     | j. situations |

### Discussion – Student A

- a) What do you think about what you read?
- b) How important are fertilizers?
- c) What do you think of everyone growing some food?
- d) How do you think the crisis in the Middle East will end?
- e) What role does the U.N. have in this crisis?
- f) Should we change what we eat to crops needing fewer fertilizers?
- g) What do you think the region will be like in a month from now?
- h) What questions would you like to ask the leaders of the US and Iran?

## Phrase Match

- |  |                                |
|--|--------------------------------|
| 1. The war in Iran has sharply           | a. global food shortage        |
| 2. it has disrupted                      | b. for attacks by the U.S.     |
| 3. in retaliation                        | c. cost shock                  |
| 4. The Persian Gulf region is a critical | d. conflict might have         |
| 5. Experts predict farmers will be       | e. shipping                    |
| 6. the crisis will cause a               | f. planting fewer crops        |
| 7. the impact the                        | g. rising fuel costs           |
| 8. this means lower yields               | h. increased fertilizer prices |
| 9. Farmers are facing a dual             | i. and crop failures           |
| 10. more expensive fertilizers alongside | j. supplier of fertilizer      |

## Discussion – Student B

- What do you know about fertilizers?
- What do you know about the Strait of Hormuz?
- How has the war in Iran affected you?
- What is the best way to end the war in the Middle East?
- Have you seen prices rising in the shops?
- What will you do if prices get really high?
- Should farmers use less fertilizer?
- What advice do you have for the leaders of the US, Israel and Iran?

## Spelling

- it has pidteurd shipping
- the gciesatrt Strait of Hormuz
- in oaelitirian for attacks by the U.S.
- a critical supplier of fertilizer dnntreigise
- ongoing ieoitshisl
- lead to lower ysdlie
- He outlined two eaicsoarn
- crop aesifulr
- affecting ogfdoiar systems
- facing a ldua cost shock
- the entire ugarlralctiu value chain
- otgaiinirr and transport

### Answers – Synonym Match

|      |      |      |      |       |
|------|------|------|------|-------|
| 1. h | 2. e | 3. a | 4. i | 5. c  |
| 6. g | 7. j | 8. f | 9. d | 10. b |

## Comprehension Questions

Listen to / read the news article. Answer these questions. (Answers are on p. 27 of the 27-page PDF.)

|     |  |
|-----|--|
| 1.  | What adjective does the writer use to describe the Hormuz Strait?        |
| 2.  | What does the writer say is a major supplier of fertilizer ingredients?  |
| 3.  | How much of the world's fertilizer trade has been disrupted?             |
| 4.  | What crops will farmers be planting fewer of?                            |
| 5.  | What will the fertilizer crisis lead to besides rising costs and prices? |
| 6.  | What U.N. agency does Carl Skau work for?                                |
| 7.  | What did Carl Skau say would happen in the worst-case scenario?          |
| 8.  | What did Carl Skau say would happen in the best-case scenario?           |
| 9.  | What systems will the fertilizer shock affect?                           |
| 10. | What part of the agricultural chain will be affected besides transport?  |

## Speaking – Shortages

Rank these with your partner. Put the worst things to be in short supply at the top. Change partners often and share your rankings.

- |                        |               |
|------------------------|---------------|
| • Oil                  | • Salt        |
| • Rare earth materials | • Cocoa beans |
| • Natural gas          | • Milk        |
| • Semiconductors       | • Sugar       |

### Answers – True False

|   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | F | 2 | F | 3 | F | 4 | T | 5 | T | 6 | F | 7 | T | 8 | T |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|

Answers to Phrase Match and Spelling are in the text.