

FAO forecasts Iran's wheat output to rise 14.2% in 2026 despite global decline

Economy Desk

The United Nations' Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) predicts Iran's wheat production to increase by 14.2% in 2026, even as global wheat output is expected to weaken by 3.8%, according to the agency's latest Food Outlook report cited by Tasnim News Agency on Friday.

The US-Israeli joint war on Iran that began on February 28 disrupted shipments of fertilizer raw materials through the Strait of Hormuz to global markets. FAO estimates that the disruption will contribute to a 3.8% drop in global wheat production during the current

crop year, with world output expected to fall to 810 million metric tons. Despite the global plunge, FAO projects that Iran would harvest 13.7 million metric tons of wheat in 2026, up from 12 million tons a year earlier. Among major wheat-producing countries, Iran is forecast to set the second-largest surge in wheat output in 2026. Turkey is expected to post the biggest increase, with output soaring 26.7%. According to FAO forecasts, US wheat production could fall 21.3% this year to 42.5 million metric tons. Wheat output is also expected to decrease by 22.2% in Kazakhstan, 19.4% in Argentina and

5.6% in the European Union.

FAO also expects Iran to rank as the world's 14th-largest wheat producer in 2026 with output of 13.7 million metric tons, unchanged from its ranking last year.

China will most probably remain the world's largest wheat producer this year, cranking out 140 million metric tons, followed by the European Union with 136.2 million tons and India with 120.2 million tons.

Russia, the United States, Canada, Australia, Pakistan, Turkey, Ukraine, Argentina, Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan are expected to rank fourth through 13th, respectively.



MOSLEH PIRKHEZRANIAN/IRNA

RAI restores one of US-struck tracks; second to reopen within hours



IRNA

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The head of the state railway company announced on Friday that one of the two railway tracks damaged in the latest US attacks was fixed and resumed passenger train services on the Tehran-Mashhad route, while repairs to the second track were expected to be completed within hours.

According to Tasnim news agency, Jabbar Ali Zakari, chief executive of the Railways

of the Islamic Republic of Iran (RAI), said technical and operational teams were deployed immediately to Torbat station after US attacks early on Thursday targeted railway infrastructure in the provinces of Golestan and Khorasan Razavi. "They managed the transfer of passengers to and from the holy city of Mashhad using buses and railbuses," Zakari said. "In less than 15 hours, one of the two railway tracks on the Teh-

ran-Mashhad route was successfully rebuilt and returned to service," he said. Zakari said that reconstruction of the second track was continuing and was expected to be completed within hours. Meanwhile, Ali Qanbarzadeh, the RAI's public relations director, told ISNA on Friday that the attacks hit the Torbat-e Heydariyeh section in Khorasan Razavi Province and the Aq Qala area in the northeast. Fars news agency re-

ported that the United States targeted the Aq-Tekeh Khan railway bridge near Aq Qala in Golestan Province on the Incheh Borun-Garmsar railway line with cruise missiles early on Thursday. The agency said the attack caused no casualties.

According to Fars, the bridge lies on the China-Kazakhstan-Turkmenistan-Incheh Borun transport corridor, which enters Iran through its northeastern border before running from Gorgan to Tehran. The route forms part of China's Belt and Road Initiative and the eastern branch of the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC).

Fars said Russia had been shipping goods through the route since last November, while freight traffic from China had tripled.

Rosatom says first Bushehr nuclear plant staff returning to Iran

Economy Desk

Russia's state nuclear corporation Rosatom said the first six employees of Iran's Bushehr Nuclear Power Plant had begun returning to the site, RIA news agency reported on Friday, citing the company's CEO Alexei Likhachev.

Rosatom, which is building two new reactors at the Bushehr plant in southern Iran, evacuated hundreds of employees after the United States and Israel launched a war against Iran on February 28.

The company halted work at new units of the Iranian nuclear power plant in the port city of Bushehr because of the US-Israeli air assault on Iran, Likhachev said in early March.

Likhachev had earlier warned of the threat posed by strikes near Iranian nuclear facilities, and said explosions could be heard "just kilometers away" from the plant, although the facility itself was not targeted. The Bushehr nuclear power plant is currently operating, while its second and third units are under construction.

The plant has a net generating capacity of 915 megawatts (MW), accounting for 1% of Iran's total electricity generation capacity, and has annual electricity production of about 6 to 7 terawatt-hours.

Its first unit was built with Russian cooperation and was designed to generate 1,000 MW of power. As of July 1, it had produced a cumulative 80 million megawatt-hours of nuclear-generated electricity supplied



A view of Bushehr Nuclear Power Plant outside the southern city of Bushehr, Iran

MEHR

to Iran's national power grid, according to Tasnim News Agency.

Last June, Rosatom signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with Iran to cooperate on the construction of small nuclear power plants in the country.

The agreement was signed in Moscow following talks between Mohammad Eslami, head of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI), and Likhachev.

Rosatom said the MoU set out specific steps for implementing the strategic project in Iran.

According to Iran's ambassador to Moscow, Kazem Jalali, the agreement signed was "worth \$25 billion."

"This is Iran's largest atomic project, being carried out by Iran's private sector in cooperation with Rosatom," he said.

Four decades of...

In his view, each institution had a distinct constitutional mission. The Army's primary responsibility was defending Iran's borders, while the IRGC was tasked with safeguarding the achievements of the Islamic Revolution—a mission that could extend to Tehran, border regions, or beyond Iran's frontiers.

Accordingly, the deployment of the Army abroad would generally be viewed as "military intervention," whereas overseas IRGC operations could fall within the framework of "protecting the achievements of the Revolution."

He also established a clear division of labor between the naval branches of the two forces. Responsibility for the Persian Gulf was assigned to the IRGC Navy, while the Gulf of Oman, the Indian Ocean, and the Caspian Sea were entrusted to the Army Navy, preventing operational overlap.

Backing missile program

Among his most significant strategic decisions was his unwavering support for Iran's missile program.

In 1985 and 1986, Martyr Hassan Tehrani Moghaddam, regarded as the father of Iran's missile program, proposed dismantling missiles purchased from Libya and Syria to gain access to their underlying technology. Ayatollah Khamenei welcomed and supported the initiative.

In the early 1990s, following the collapse of the Soviet Union, newly independent states were prepared to sell advanced missile systems to Iran. While many officials enthusiastically supported the purchases, Martyr Khamenei stood alone in firmly opposing the idea. Instead, he issued a clear directive: "Go and build them yourselves." He even prohibited further discussion of purchasing foreign missiles.

His insistence on self-sufficiency and indigenous development ultimately

laid the foundation for Iran's advanced missile capabilities.

He also repeatedly stressed the importance of missile accuracy, particularly precision-strike capability. The rationale behind that emphasis became evident during operations against the Daesh in Syria. In some instances, American military bases were located only two or three kilometers from Daesh positions, while civilian populations were present on the opposite side. The high precision of Iranian missiles allowed the operations to be carried out without creating unnecessary complications or causing harm to civilians.

Ayatollah Khamenei correctly recognized that Iran would never possess air power and air-defense capabilities on the same scale as the United States and the Israeli regime. Consequently, deterrence had to be built through missile capabilities and carefully calibrated military strategy.

For that reason, he consistently opposed including Iran's missile program in negotiations, arguing that diplomacy without power carries little weight. Without credible defensive and missile capabilities, he believed, the opposing side would regard Iran as a "cash cow" and seek to exploit the country's God-given resources for its own benefit.

Lessons from 12-day, 40-day wars

During the 12-day war, he concluded that US military bases across the region—particularly radar installations—should be targeted. That assessment was later put into practice during the 40-day war.

Through close battlefield management, he also instructed commanders at every level to designate successors in advance to ensure continuity of command under all circumstances.

Possessing a comprehensive command of military affairs, Martyr Khamenei

examined lengthy reports line by line and assessed every detail with meticulous care. His broad strategic outlook enabled Iran to maintain a military balance with the United States throughout the regional conflict.

Convinced that dependence on foreign suppliers would inevitably constrain Iran's strategic freedom, he consistently emphasized self-reliance in developing indigenous fighter aircraft, including the Azarakhsh, as well as hypersonic missile technology.

Overall, Martyr Khamenei was a cleric with exceptional military brilliance—a quality that was also recognized by Martyr Major General Mohammad-Vali Qarani, the Army's chief of staff and one of Iran's most distinguished military commanders. Qarani remarked that had he pursued a career in the armed forces, he would have risen to one of the highest military ranks—an assessment that underscored the depth of his military aptitude.