

Food self-sufficiency improved despite sanctions, war: *Minister*



Agriculture Minister Gholamreza Nouri-Quezeljeh (2nd L) attends the 54th Session of the Committee on World Food Security at the headquarters of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) in Rome, Italy, on October 20, 2026.
● IRNA

Economy Desk

Iran has increased self-sufficiency in most agricultural and food products and boosted output of major staples despite sanctions, two wars and an economic blockade, Agriculture Minister Gholamreza Nouri-Quezeljeh said at a global food security meeting in Rome. Speaking at the 54th Session of

the Committee on World Food Security at the headquarters of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), Nouri-Quezeljeh said Iran had made significant progress in food security and sustainable agriculture, according to a report by IRNA on Tuesday. He said the country had relied on domestic capabilities and expertise to increase self-sufficiency

in essential commodities. "Despite two imposed wars, sanctions and a blockade, Iran's agricultural sector was a leading sector of the economy in the past year (2025-2026)," Nouri-Quezeljeh said, adding that the country had achieved self-sufficiency in most agricultural and food products and increased production across all major staples. The minister did not provide

overall production figures. However, Deputy Agriculture Minister for Crop Production Majid Anjafi said in August that agricultural output had risen to 137 million tons over the previous year from 130 million tons, despite severe drought, water shortages, sanctions and energy imbalances. Separately, a report by the Agricultural Research, Education and Extension Organization cited 5.5% growth in the sector and a 9-million-ton increase in production over the same period, despite drought and other difficulties. It also said financial discipline had generated savings of about \$1 billion in the agricultural sector over the past year. Iran faces mounting external pressure, including a US naval

blockade imposed in mid-April aimed at pushing Tehran toward a peace agreement following the 40-day US-Israeli war that began in late February. Israel also launched a 12-day war against Iran in June 2024. Western sanctions over Iran's nuclear program have been in place for decades, raising costs even in humanitarian areas such as access to medicines, although food and agricultural goods are formally exempt from sanctions regimes. At the FAO meeting, Nouri-Quezeljeh identified technological development, the role of local communities and indigenous knowledge, the preservation of globally significant agricultural heritage, the development of agricultural value chains, and prioritizing food security in national development plans as key features of Iran's agricultural and food production system. He also highlighted the country's focus on rural-based agricultural development. Criticizing "contradictions between the conduct of certain

countries and FAO principles," he said using food, unilateral sanctions and economic blockades as tools of political pressure, or using hunger as a weapon in conflicts, ran counter to humanitarian principles and the spirit behind the organization's founding. He added that economic sanctions had disrupted the transfer of modern agricultural technologies, food trade and investment in infrastructure. Despite these constraints, Nouri-Quezeljeh said Iran remained fully prepared to expand cooperation with FAO, its member states and other interested countries. He said global challenges could be resolved only through regional and international cooperation, adding that Iran welcomed joint projects, technical knowledge exchanges and the transfer of modern technologies with FAO and member states. Iran was also ready to share its experience in water resource management, climate-resilient agriculture and improving food security, he said.

Azadegan oil well output rises 293% after pump installation

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Daily oil output from a well in the shared Azadegan oil field has risen by 293% to 1,710 barrels following the installation of the field's first electric submersible pump (ESP), Tasnim news agency reported. Esmaeil Gholampour Ahangar, the field's development project manager, said production from well AZNS-156 had increased from 435 barrels per day to 1,710 bpd after the pump was installed and commissioned. The 130-horsepower pump was installed over 20 days, from September 26 to October 15, in line with the approved schedule, bringing the well into production, he said. The project added 1,275 bpd to the well's output.



Downhole pumps help move fluids from reservoirs to the surface, reducing limitations caused by declining natural reservoir pressure and supporting higher, more stable production. Well No. 141, located on Pad 54 of the Azadegan field, has been designated as the next priority for installation and commissioning of a downhole pump. Iran has also signed a 24-month contract to raise production from 55 wells at the Azadegan field to 550,000 barrels per day

(bpd), from around 230,000 bpd. The Integrated Production Services contract was signed by Dasht Azadegan Arvand Oil & Gas Development Co. and Oil Exploration Operations Co. (OEOC) as part of a broader integrated development project for the field. Azadegan, Iran's largest shared oil field, lies in the oil-rich southwestern province of Khuzestan near the border with Iraq. Its North and South sections together form a field known as Majnoon on the Iraqi side of the border. The field is considered the world's 10th-largest oil field and is estimated to contain 33 billion barrels of oil in place, of which around 5.2 billion barrels are considered recoverable for Iran.

US may return ...

Nevertheless, the key measure of genuine progress is not simply the holding of high-level meetings, but a shift in the parties' positions, agreement on the sequencing of commitments or the establishment of specific implementation arrangements. Until such evidence emerges, it is more accurate to speak of an expanded capacity for mediation and efforts to manage the costs of the crisis than to suggest that negotiations are firmly on track.

Statements have emerged about the possibility of the United States using extremely powerful bunker-buster bombs, including the weapon known as the "mother of all bombs," to target Iran's nuclear facilities. How should these threats be assessed?

These threats should be assessed both in the context of psychological and diplomatic pressure and in terms of the possibility of military escalation. Raising military options can be intended to increase the perceived cost of Iran's resistance and strengthen Washington's position in negotiations. However, considering a military option should not be equated with a definitive decision to carry it out.

There is an important technical distinction in this regard. The GBU-43/B, known as the "mother of all bombs," is a munition with an extremely high explosive yield, but it differs from the specialized penetrator designed to strike hardened, deeply buried targets, known as the GBU-57. Therefore, the possibility of using the GBU-43/B does not, in itself, mean that it would be capable of reliably destroying Iran's hardened underground nuclear facilities. From this perspective, talk of using this weapon against Iran's nuclear sites may be more of a propaganda or psychological warfare tactic. Strategically, the central issue is not simply a weapon's destructive

power, but the relationship between the military objective and its political consequences. An attack on sensitive infrastructure could cause significant damage, but it would not necessarily lead to a lasting resolution of the disputes or eliminate Iran's strategic capabilities. Conversely, such an attack could trigger retaliation, widen the conflict and sharply increase risks to shipping and regional infrastructure. Military threats can also have a dual effect on diplomacy. On the one hand, they may be used to extract concessions in negotiations. On the other, they can erode the trust necessary for an agreement and lead the other side to conclude that the threat of another attack would remain even after a deal was reached. This is particularly important when the core dispute is not merely about a temporary halt to hostilities, but also about guarantees that commitments will be honored and that the crisis will not return in the future.

How could the US midterm elections and the domestic political considerations facing the administration affect Washington's decisions regarding Iran's proposal and its approach to Tehran?

The November 3 midterm elections could affect the timing and form of the US administration's decisions, but they will not necessarily determine the direction of its policy. Under current circumstances, the Trump administration faces a clear political challenge: how to contain the economic costs of the war without being accused at home of backing down in the face of Iran. Rising energy prices, pressure on households and concerns about a prolonged war increase the administration's incentive to ease the crisis before the election. Donald Trump has also explicitly stated that the United States would not attack Iran before the election and

has referred to ongoing talks. This position suggests that electoral considerations can influence the timing of military action, although they do not, in themselves, guarantee an agreement. At the same time, his emphasis on maintaining the blockade shows that refraining from a military attack does not necessarily mean abandoning instruments of pressure.

Another important factor is the distinction between reaching an agreement before the election and making decisions afterward. The US administration may seek to secure a temporary period of calm before voters go to the polls, while postponing the resolution of fundamental disputes to later stages. Conversely, if it judges the political cost of an agreement to be greater than that of continuing the confrontation, it may prolong negotiations or rely more heavily on pressure tactics. Electoral considerations could therefore both strengthen the incentive to contain the crisis and limit the concessions the Trump administration is willing to accept. From Iran's perspective, US foreign policy should not be interpreted solely through the lens of electoral competition. A change in the composition of Congress does not, by itself, mean an immediate shift in Washington's policy toward Tehran, although it can affect congressional oversight, budgetary decisions and the political environment in which the administration makes decisions. Overall, the election could create an opportunity to contain the crisis temporarily, but it offers no guarantee of a lasting agreement. Turning this opportunity into a tangible outcome requires a framework that phases the implementation of commitments and makes them verifiable. Otherwise, electoral considerations may merely change the timing and form of the next confrontation rather than bring the underlying disputes to an end.

Afghanistan-Iran-Turkey freight train set to launch soon, official says

Economy Desk

Preparations are complete for the launch of the first commercial and transit train linking Afghanistan, Iran and Turkey, with all necessary approvals secured in the three countries, the head of the Afghanistan Railway Development Consortium said. Mostafa Rezaei told IRNA on Tuesday that the train would run once a week without stops, departing from Herat and traveling via the Khaf railway and Iran's rail network to the Razi border terminal in West Azerbaijan Province. It



would then enter Turkey and travel through the city of Van to the Mediterranean port of Mersin. The locomotive will be Iranian and the wagons European, Rezaei said, adding that the consortium's Iranian operations would manage the train's movements. He said the service was expected to officially begin in the near future.

About 100,000 metric tons of goods are currently shipped to Afghanistan each month via the Khaf-Herat railway, Rezaei said. According to IRNA, more than 1 million metric tons of export and transit goods were transported to Afghanistan along the route between the start of its official operations in February-March 2024 and the end of May 2026. The Khaf-Herat railway connects Iran's rail network to western Afghanistan and forms part of an east-west rail corridor linking China, Central Asia, Afghanistan, Iran, Turkey and Europe.