

US hopes India would 'reconsider' its decision to restrict wheat exports

The US hopes India will “reconsider” its decision to ban wheat exports, with Washington “encouraging” countries not to restrict exports as that will exacerbate food shortages, amidst Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

India, the world's second-biggest wheat producer, has banned wheat exports in a bid to check high domestic prices amid concerns of wheat output being hit by scorching heat waves. The decision would help control retail prices of wheat and wheat flour, which have risen by an average 14-20 per cent in the last one year, besides meeting the foodgrain requirement of neighbouring and vulnerable countries.

US Ambassador to the UN Linda Thomas-Greenfield, during a virtual New York Foreign Press Center briefing on Monday, said: “We have seen the report of India's decision. We're encouraging countries not to restrict exports because we think any restrictions on exports will exacerbate the food shortages”. “But you've – again, India will be one of the countries participating in our meeting at the Security Council, and we hope that they can, as they hear the concerns being raised by other countries, that they would reconsider that position,” she said.

On the eve of the Security Council meeting, Blinken on Wednesday will chair a global food security call to action ministerial meeting which will bring together officials from dozens of countries to review their urgent humanitarian and development needs to address global food security, nutrition and resilience, Thomas-Greenfield said.

The Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT) had said in a notification last week that wheat exports will be allowed on the basis of permission granted by the Government of India to other countries to meet their food security needs and based on the request of their governments.

India's wheat exports stood at an all-time high of 7 million tonnes, valuing USD 2.05 billion, in 2021-22 fiscal year on better demand of Indian wheat from overseas. Of the total wheat exports, around 50 per cent of shipments were exported to Bangladesh in the last fiscal.