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Special Focus on

Agribusiness in Ukraine

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Lockdown 3

Lockdown 1:
March 17-May 24, 2020

Lockdown 2:
Jan. 8-24

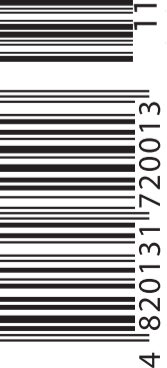
Lockdown 3:
March 20-April 9

Infections: **1.5 million**. Deaths: **29,253**.
Vaccinations: **81,753**. (As of March 18)



See stories on pages 5, 19

A curtain separates 57-year-old Vasyi Stefurak (L), a coronavirus patient, from the body of a patient who died on March 16 in the central hospital of Kolomyia, a city of 61,000 people some 580 kilometers southwest of Kyiv. The hospital is in the epicenter of the surge of COVID-19 infections in Ukraine. Kyiv and the western regions, that suffer the most, introduced lockdowns. Meanwhile, the pace of vaccination remains extremely low, with only 81,753 people vaccinated with the first of the two doses of the vaccine, and only one person receiving both doses, as of March 17.



Magazine is coming out on April 2



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Zelensky's declaration of war against oligarchy

Editor's Note: The following is the English-language translation of a March 12 address to the nation by President Volodymyr Zelensky, explaining recent decisions by the National Security and Defense Council. The full text is from the president's official website.

Fellow citizens of Ukraine! Dear nation!

Yesterday, a meeting of the National Security and Defense Council of Ukraine took place under my chairmanship. The fourth over the last month, and I can assure you it's not the last.

First of all, I would like to thank all the members of the National Security and Defense Council present yesterday for their important work, active position, and readiness to defend the state interests of Ukraine.

It is no secret that the latest decisions of the National Security and Defense Council have caused considerable resonance. Public approval and, of course, the indignation of those who find their names and businesses in the decisions of the National Security and Defense Council. Today I will summarize the preliminary results, set the record straight and explain in simple language to you – our citizens of Ukraine, what exactly is happening.

I would briefly describe this process in three words: Ukraine fights back.

Fights all those who have been dealing blows to it for many years, taking advantage of its weakness, lack of law, order, and most importantly – justice.

Justice, which for many years has not been even in short supply for ordinary people. It was something mythical, as if from legends about the fern flower. While you and I believed that justice existed, and tried unsuccessfully to find it, some appropriated state resources, subsoil, strategic enterprises, pipelines, and even, as it turned out, the Constitutional Court of Ukraine. In a word – everything in sight.

Restoring justice in Ukraine was one of my key promises. People say you have to wait three years for the promised.

We started a little earlier.

First of all, we stopped attempts to divide Ukraine with propaganda and disinformation. On Feb. 2, 2021, the activities of those who consid-



Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky attends a meeting of the National Security and Defense Council on March 11, 2021 in Kyiv.



Viktor Medvedchuk



Rinat Akhmetov



Ihor Kolomoisky



Viktor Pinchuk



Petro Poroshenko



Dmytro Firtash

ered it normal to do business in the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine and finance disinformation battalions that attacked Ukrainians with volleys of lies and manipulation were blocked.

Of course, everyone is wondering why this was not done by the previous leadership of the country during all the years of the war? Apparently, the question is rhetorical. Perhaps

they acted according to the logic "it's apples and oranges."

Further. On Feb. 19, assets, property, licenses, and permits of businesses associated with Mr. [Viktor] Medvedchuk were blocked.

It was also instructed to return the Prykarpatskzhidtrans oil pipeline to state ownership. And, no less important, to find out under what circumstances in 2015, during the hetmanate of everyone knows who, a state oil pipeline almost one and a half thousand kilometers long turned out to be in private ownership.

Also, a fair and lawful reaction from Ukraine should be received by those who believed that not the state, but private hands may possess a controlling stake in strategic defense enterprises of Ukraine, in particular Motor Sich, as well as land and subsoil belonging to the people of Ukraine.

How did this even happen?

Again, a rhetorical question. But the answers will be found by law enforcement agencies together with

the State Service for Geology and Subsoil. Citizens need to know how and under what conditions a number of people in Ukraine received certain resources.

Those who did it legally have nothing to fear. But in order to make this clear, the most detailed audit will be conducted, the results of which will be presented to the public. I am convinced that these answers should not be rhetorical, but specific, comprehensive and reasoned – both for citizens and for possible future lawsuits.

Regarding the sanctions of the United States of America against the former owners of PrivatBank. We support this decision and we are working to return the money to Ukraine.

To return justice to Ukraine. Its main principle is that we clearly see the difference between the concepts of "big business" and "oligarchic class."

But the names do not make any difference here: Medvedchuk, [Ihor] Kolomoisky, [Petro] Poroshenko, [Rinat] Akhmetov, [Victor] Pinchuk, [Dmytro] Firtash or anyone else.

One thing is important – are you ready to work legally and transparently or do you want to continue to create monopolies, control the media, influence deputies and other civil servants?

The first is welcome.

The second ends.

Also, yesterday we finally did what should have appeared in 2014. The state Strategy of de-occupation and reintegration of Crimea and Sevastopol has been approved. To those who counted on something, I can say: forget that Ukraine will forget about Crimea.

At the same time, when we talk about de-occupation, it is logical to understand who created conditions for occupation and how? And we are talking not only about 2014, but also about the adoption of the so-called Kharkiv agreements.

All this is by no means a complete list of steps taken by the state recently. And not the final list of measures that will be taken by the state in the near future. I emphasize – taken by our state, at our discretion, in accordance with our duty, and not because someone called us.

Two things are enough for me to protect the interests of Ukraine. The first was on Jan. 25, 1978. The day I was born in this country, on our Ukrainian land. The second was on May 20, 2019, when I swore to defend our Ukraine with all my actions. I do not need additional motivation, in particular from our partners. Support – yes. And we will always be grateful for it.

But first of all, we have to protect ourselves, no one will do it for us. And Ukraine can make its own decisions to protect itself and restore justice.

Can. Wants to. And will do so. And for those who still doubt it...

Until the next meetings of the National Security and Defense Council.

Glory to Ukraine! 🇺🇦

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As Zelensky vows to take down oligarchs, the focus is on Kolomoisky

By **Oleksiy Sorokin**
sorokin@kyivpost.com

Ihor Kolomoisky, facing mounting challenges to his billion-dollar business empire, remains a dominant player in many sectors of Ukraine's economy.

He's defeated all opponents in the past. But his luck may be running out.

In Ukraine, Kolomoisky's associates were charged with embezzlement in late February. Soon the oligarch was slapped with U.S. sanctions, banning him and his family from entering the country. The distinct possibility of a U.S. criminal indictment for money laundering is looming. The U.S. sanctions were an unobvious signal to President Volodymyr Zelensky that it was time to begin his long-promised fight

against oligarchs — perhaps starting with Special K.

Zelensky appears to have gotten the hint.

On March 12, the president issued a video address to the nation, vowing to go after oligarchs, including Kolomoisky.

But the past has shown that the oligarchs, individually and collectively, are stronger than the state.

Kolomoisky retains his grip over Ukrnafta, the country's largest oil company. He owns Ukraine's only oil refinery. He produces 80% of the country's ferroalloy. He controls 15% of the TV market. And, by reliable estimates, he exerts strong influence over at least 50 of the 423 lawmakers in parliament.

Meanwhile, all eyes are on the investigation of PrivatBank, which Kolomoisky used to own and allegedly used to steal \$5.5 billion



A protester holds a playing card with a portrait of oligarch Ihor Kolomoisky, former owner of PrivatBank, in front of a court in Kyiv on Feb. 8, 2021. The man protests against Kolomoisky's attempts to take back control of the now state-owned bank.

with his cronies. It won't be enough for Ukrainian prosecutors to charge several underlings without going after the boss.

"Criminal charges against Kolomoisky would be a real indication that the government is serious in its fight against him," says Tetiana Shevchuk, a lawyer with the Anti-Corruption Action Center, a Kyiv-based watchdog.

Kolomoisky denies PrivatBank embezzlement accusations, and challenges the nationalization of his former bank in courts. He didn't

comment on the U.S. sanctions against him.

Courts & sanctions

When Zelensky was elected president in 2019, things looked very good for Kolomoisky.

After confrontation and self-imposed exile during much of President Petro Poroshenko's five-year rule, he was back in Ukraine and riding high again.

Kolomoisky's TV channel was a key platform for Zelensky's election campaign. The oligarch's top

lawyer Andriy Bohdan became Zelensky's chief of staff. The media openly asked whether Zelensky was Kolomoisky's puppet.

Kolomoisky's first year under Zelensky went well.

Through political intrigues and pocket lawmakers, Kolomoisky gained control of Centrenergo, a state-owned energy company, and preserved his control over Ukrnafta, a state-owned petroleum producer where he owns a big minority

→ page 14

Advertisement

New Holland: Ukrainian agriculture is technology hungry

The farm machinery manufacturer New Holland Agriculture sees boundless potential for agriculture in Ukraine, and not just in such well-established cash crops as sunflowers, corn and winter wheat, but also in niche markets like viticulture. "I expect crop specialization to become more common here in Ukraine, as the diversity of the country allows it and farmers are very interested," New Holland Business Director for Ukraine and Moldova Stanislav Storozhuk says. "And we can supply the right machines for it all."

From unknown to market leader

New Holland in Ukraine has been a story of rapid growth, selling combines and tractors to a wide variety of customers. "Twenty years ago, when New Holland first came to Ukraine, nobody had ever heard of the company, not even me," Stanislav laughs. "Now, we have been a market leader for the past ten years in new combines sales. Last year, we were number one in tractors sold in Ukraine as well. Every second new combine sold in Ukraine is a New Holland."

From its small office in Kyiv, New Holland works with a network of dealers, with six in Ukraine and two in Moldova. The company sells a wide range of machinery in these countries, from small, specialized tractors made in Italy and Turkey to massive high-tech combines manufactured in Belgium and Poland and heavy tractors made in the USA.

"Ukraine is becoming an increasingly important market for New Holland, and we are planning to invest more here," Stanislav Storozhuk says. "In 2017, Ukraine was the second-largest market for New Holland combines in the world, after Brazil. And Brazil has double the arable land as Ukraine. Last year, we were number two in Europe, after France. And Ukraine has far greater potential than more established markets."

The business director has a theory that one of the reasons why New Holland is so popular in Ukraine is that the company's colours match the state flag. "With our yellow combines and blue tractors working the fields, you can't help but think of Ukraine," he jokes.

All modern farming methods welcome

Ukraine's vast size and relative youth present a unique opportunity for agri-business to apply both European and American methods of farming, according to Stanislav Storozhuk. "Our main clients are what we call mid-sized farms, around 2000-7000 hectares, which are much bigger than in Europe, where the biggest I met is just 600 hectares," he says. And as a global company with a strong presence in such distant markets as Brazil and the USA, New Holland has no problem satisfying the broad demand such diverse holdings entail.

Stanislav Storozhuk is keen to point out that farming in Ukraine is far more modern than what many might assume. "I would like to say that agriculture in Ukraine is quite developed. We are not



behind even Europe, partly because of the bigger farmers and bigger fields here, which allows them to use economies of scale and apply new technologies much more effectively," the business director says. "Ukraine belongs to the European market, and has for some time."

And Ukrainian commercial agriculture is moving forward very rapidly, Stanislav notes. He cites the launching of a proper land market, expected this year, as one of the main catalysts for development. "This should have a dramatic impact on agriculture, not least in farm size," the director explains. "In ten years, the industry could look considerably different, with more specialization. There will be structural changes. I expect to see more medium and small farmers, although I don't see big agri-holdings disappearing in 10, 20 years."

Unquenched thirst for new technology

But the future is now for New Holland in Ukraine. Record high grain prices last season brought an influx of cash to farmers, who have not been shy about spending it on new equipment. "We are already seeing a high demand, especially last November and December, so much so that our factories are challenged to keep pace," Stanislav Storozhuk says. "Sales are good!"

This rising demand coupled with the growing importance of Ukraine on global commodities markets allows New Holland to constantly introduce new technologies. Increased efficiency and automation is the goal! "We are building network of RTK (Real-Time Kinematic) base stations to cover the whole territory of Ukraine and plan to finish it by the end of 2021" Stanislav Storozhuk explains. "For each combine and tractor we sell, we are able to supply an RTK signal via satellite that can ensure up to 1,5cm accuracy on a field, whether for seeding or for harvesting. The tractors work ergonomically, with the driver needing to do not much more than watch the scenery go by." He adds that for ve-

hicles produced from 2019 and ordered with all necessary equipment, New Holland will supply the RTK signal for free.

Ukrainian farmers are also snapping up the brand new model CH7.70 combine, which was shown off around the country last year. Equipped with wholly new technologies, the vehicle features the innovative 'Crossover Harvesting' concept that brings together twin rotor separation with conventional threshing technology to deliver substantial efficiency gains, "of up to 25% productivity vs conventional machines and 15% higher throughput," Stanislav Storozhuk boasts. "Dealers were able to fulfill the orders for this combine and deliver them to customers. Yes, the demand for these new machines and new technologies is very strong here."

New Holland has also developed methane powered tractors, a cheaper and more environmentally friendly fuel than the traditional diesel. Starting from this summer, New Holland clients will be able to order methane powered tractors, according to Stanislav. "And soon, hopefully, Ukrainian farmers will be able to buy electric tractors also," he says, explaining that the company recently acquired a minority share in the US-based Monarch Tractor, a global leader in electric tractor technology.

Raising better agronomists

New Holland is vested in Ukraine's agricultural development down to its roots. The company works closely with local agronomic institutes and universities, sending its own specialists to share knowledge with students and lecturers alike. "We are involved in the NGO Ukrainian Agribusiness Club, providing bursaries and scholarships for education here and abroad," Stanislav Storozhuk says. "We consider ourselves as a partner in the full spectrum of Ukrainian agriculture."

The coronavirus pandemic has not affected New Holland or agriculture all that much, Stanislav says, yet the company is well aware of its potential negative impact. Therefore, New Holland has decided to adjust its client-care policy by building new spare parts depots closer to customers, building up stocks should the supply chain be put under strain, and working more closely with dealers. The company has also launched special training on how to deal with coronavirus-related issues.

Stanislav Storozhuk sees climate change providing Ukrainian agriculture with opportunities, as well as challenges. "For the first time, corn is being planted in western Ukraine, because of the now longer growing season, and while drought is affecting the south, like around Odessa, I see great potential for viticulture and orchards there," he says.

newholland.com



EDITORIALS

Taxing Big Tobacco

The tobacco giants are creative in coming up with new products to addict young customers and kill their old ones with cancer. They're also equally inventive in lobbying lawmakers and finding accomplices among business associations, such as the European Business Association and American Chamber of Commerce in Ukraine, to carry their water.

From vaping to "heat sticks" like iQOS, the tobacco industry's game has been to find new ways to deliver nicotine since traditional cigarettes fell out of favor. In doing so, they stay ahead of regulators and public health advocates who have waged effective campaigns to reduce smoking. They did so with these pillars: high taxes, advertising bans, warning labels on packs (and, recently, plain packaging), indoor smoking bans and public education.

There's no evidence to suggest that the "heat sticks" are any less deadly than traditional cigarettes, yet they are not regulated in Ukraine as tobacco products — meaning they can be marketed to children. In fact, Philip Morris Ukraine and British American Tobacco have been caught selling and delivering their heated tobacco products to minors, said Lilia Olefir, executive director of Life, a non-profit organization that promotes strong anti-tobacco legislation.

Ukraine's government took the right step last year by tripling the excise tax for heated tobacco products to bring it in line with the rate for traditional cigarettes. This is a win-win-win-win: High prices discourage young smokers, encourage older smokers to quit, improve public health and bolster tax revenues.

Still, Ukraine's cigarettes are among the cheapest in the world — allowing domestic factories run by Philip Morris International, Japan Tobacco International, Imperial Tobacco, and British American Tobacco — to overproduce and look the other way as cheap surplus cigarettes get illegally smuggled to European Union nations, where cigarette taxes are higher.

Like pouting babies, tobacco companies have threatened to pull out of Ukraine if they don't get their taxes reduced by 30%. To that, we say: 1. It's a bluff (tobacco companies love Ukraine's cheap labor and lawmakers) and 2. If it's not a bluff, good riddance. The big four, combined with monopoly tobacco distributor Tedis Ukraine, are cancers on Ukrainian society.

They've got powerful allies, however. David Arakhamia, leader of President Volodymyr Zelensky's ruling 245-member Servant of the People faction, is in Big Tobacco's corner. So are the EBA and ACC.

Olefir says the EBA has reliably lobbied the tobacco industry's interests for a long time. So has the ACC. In opposing the tax increase, the ACC said on Feb. 23, 2021: "Such a sharp increase in tax can lead to devastating consequences for the market and the economy of the country..." It looks as if it was written by the tobacco industry, proven liars. Philip Morris once laid out its strategy to addict children: "Today's teenager is tomorrow's potential regular customer, and the overwhelming majority of smokers first begin to smoke while still in their teens... The smoking patterns of teenagers are particularly important to Philip Morris."

The Kyiv Post is a member of the EBA and ACC. But to retain credibility, these associations should choose public health over lobbying the interests of an industry whose products kill nearly 100,000 Ukrainians each year.

Going backwards

When Ukrainian civil society and the nation's Western friends admonish the government to establish rule of law and overhaul a corrupt and distrusted judiciary, what do they get in response? Judging from this week's developments, only disdain and disrespect.

This poor showing by President Volodymyr Zelensky is not going to get him an audience with U.S. President Joe Biden anytime soon. And it's certainly going to keep Western allies at a distance.

What happened that was so bad? Investigations into one of Ukraine's most corrupt courts, led by Pavlo Vovk, got killed along with another one into alleged corruption by a top presidential aide.

On March 17, the High Anti-Corruption Court refused to extend an investigation against Vovk, who epitomizes judicial lawlessness. Under a ridiculous law that gives courts arbitrary powers, prosecutors have to either close the case or send it to trial within five days. A law enforcement source told the Kyiv Post that the case won't be sent to trial soon, which means that it will be buried for good.

In February, Kyiv's Shevchenko District Court also refused to extend the bribery case against Zelensky's deputy chief of staff Oleh Tatarov despite the fact that it has no such jurisdiction. The case was not sent to trial within five days, and now it is officially dead.

Zelensky's loyal Prosecutor General Iryna Venediktova has proven to be both ineffective and obstructionist during her year in office. Venediktova has done her best to save Tatarov and Vovk. Zelensky also has done nothing to distance himself from this duo. The judiciary's governing body — the High Council of Justice — helped Vovk by refusing to suspend him.

Until Tatarov and Vovk are fired and prosecuted, Zelensky's talk about de-oligarchization and his moves against pro-Kremlin lawmaker Viktor Medvedchuk and billionaire oligarch Ihor Kolomoisky will ring hollow.

To add insult to injury, the Supreme Court on March 17 reinstated Oksana Tsarevych as a judge at Kyiv's Pechersk District Court. Tsarevych used forged documents to strip the driver's licenses of protesters during the EuroMaidan Revolution, which ousted President Viktor Yanukovich in 2014. Her reinstatement is more proof of faltering judicial reform.

Meanwhile, the Cabinet tried on March 15 to help corrupt judges and officials by submitting a new bill to fire Artem Sytnyk, head of the National Anti-Corruption Bureau of Ukraine, or NABU.

Zelensky and his Cabinet are doing their best to undermine anti-corruption institutions and cooperation with Western partners. So far, Ukraine is failing on judicial reform. A corrupt counter-revolution against the democratic EuroMaidan values, which started under ex-President Petro Poroshenko, is accelerating under Zelensky.



NEWS ITEM:
Prosecutor General Iryna Venediktova on March 15 announced additional charges against three former PrivatBank executives for embezzling \$300 million. The charges are part of an ongoing investigation into the bank fraud that cost Ukraine \$5.5 billion — the money allegedly moved out of PrivatBank by its former owners and oligarchs Ihor Kolomoisky and Gennadiy Bogolyubov via fraudulent schemes. In 2016, the bank was nationalized. And while Ukraine's authorities have charged some of the bank's former executives, they haven't charged Kolomoisky and Bogolyubov, the alleged masterminds of the scheme, who have repeatedly denied wrongdoing.



NEWS ITEM:
At least half of Ukraine's population of 40 million is not willing to be vaccinated against coronavirus, according to various polls. Many of those who are against vaccines say they don't trust the type of vaccine used in Ukraine — CoviShield developed by Oxford/ AstraZeneca and manufactured in India.



NEWS ITEM:
A son of oligarch Rinat Akhmetov, 32-year-old Damir Akhmetov became an owner of a \$65 million villa in Switzerland in December 2020. The villa comes with 7,600 square meters of land. Akhmetov's son sits on the supervisory boards of his father's companies.



NEWS ITEM:
Leader of the Servant of the People parliamentary faction David Arakhamia is trying to convince Ukrainian lawmakers to lower taxes on certain tobacco products. He personally filed an amendment to decrease the tax for heated tobacco by 30% starting April 1. Arakhamia defended lower taxation of heated tobacco as economically viable, and denied that he was lobbying for the tobacco industry. Arakhamia's argument in favor of lower taxes echoes position of tobacco giant Philip Morris International, which claims that high taxes will lead to more smuggling..

See these features online at kyivpost.com

Ukraine's Friend & Foe Of The Week



Friend

Temel Kotil, CEO of Turkish Aerospace Industries
Turkey is developing a new advanced combat helicopter for itself. And Ukraine is expected to get a juicy contract to produce scores of engines for the project — and this means millions of dollars and hundreds of jobs for Ukrainian engineers.



Foe

Sebastian Kurtz, prime minister of Austria
The Austrian press has recently busted Kurtz for using a private jet indirectly owned by Dmytro Firtash, the exiled Ukrainian oligarch wanted in the United States for bribery. The sweet fraternity between Firtash and the Austrian authorities harboring him apparently knows no bounds.

Feel strongly about an issue? Agree or disagree with editorial positions in this newspaper?
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Haunted by death, Kolomyia hospital strives to save lives

By Anna Myroniuk
myroniuk@kyivpost.com

It's a tough morning for the patients of a four-bed intensive care ward in Kolomyia District Hospital in western Ukraine.

Only three of them woke up this morning. The fourth, a 67-year-old man, died of coronavirus complications.

"He was half-blue. This means that a big blood clot broke and clogged a major blood vessel," says medical director Viktor Boyko, pointing at the body in the black bag, still on the hospital bed.

"The worst thing for a doctor is the eyes of the patients he lost," he says. "You see them in the night when you dream. These eyes are begging for help, full of despair and fear. With each dying patient, the doctor who treated and lost him, dies for a minute, too."

A thin striped curtain separates the dead from the living.

On the one side of it, there is the black body bag.

On the other, 57-year-old Vasyl Stefurak looks forward to being discharged. "First thing I will do when I get out is go fishing," he says as he lies on his stomach, wearing an

Volodymyr Petrov



Vitaliy Yakubiyak, an anesthesiologist at Kolomyia District Hospital, stands next to a CPAP (Continuous Positive Airway Pressure) machine supplying oxygen to his patient on March 16, 2021.

On the opposite side of the ward, a woman in her 30s starts breathing heavily.

"She's young but she started feeling worse," Boyko says. "We are looking into whether her indicators dropped after she saw what happened."

Ihor Klapko, head of the hospital's inpatient department, puts it this way: "These days, all of the patients fear death."

Since the beginning of the pandemic, 205 patients have died of coronavirus in this hospital.

According to the administration, COVID-19 has almost doubled the institution's annual mortality rate.

"Someone is dying almost every day," Klapko says.

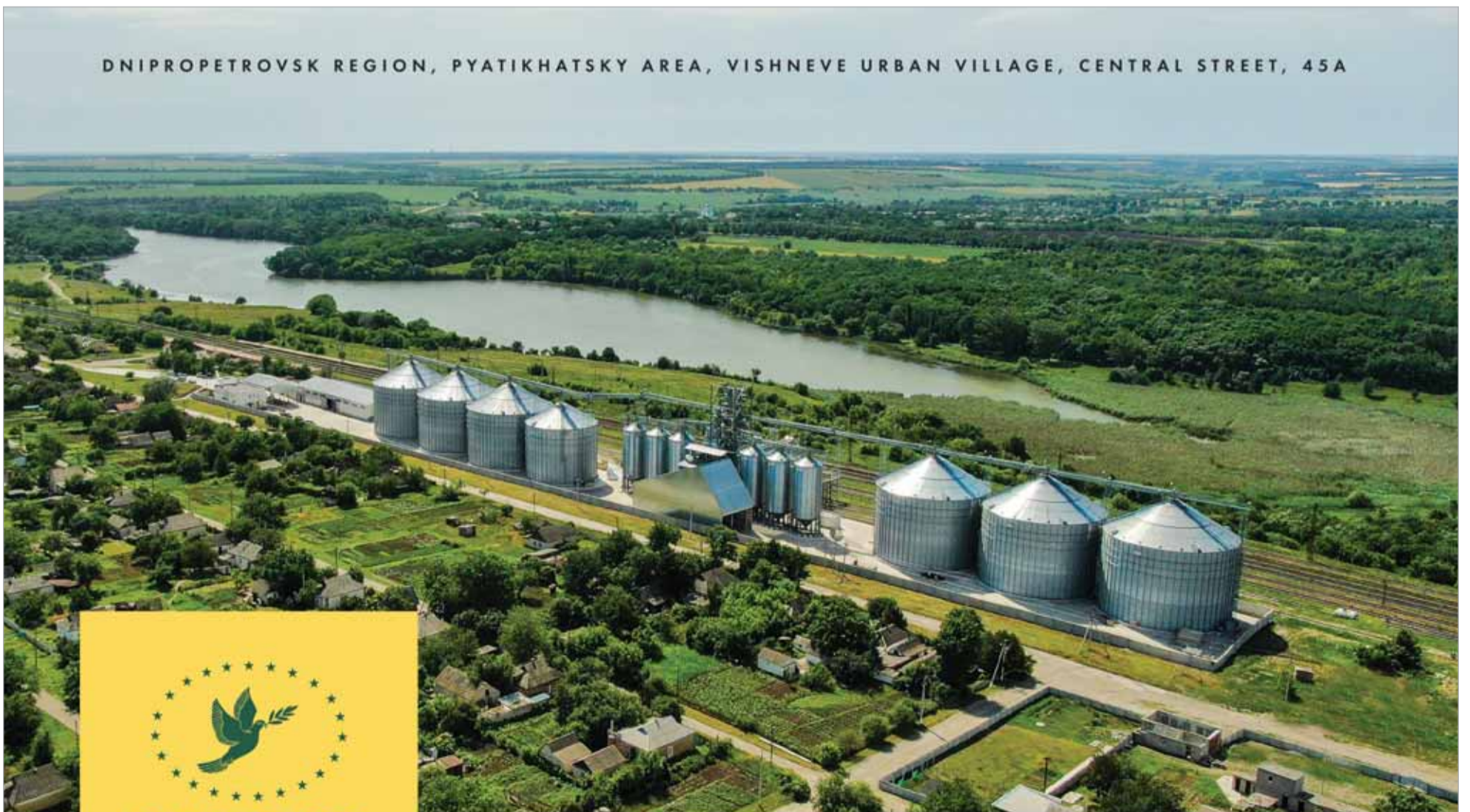
The hospital is in the Ivano-Frankivsk Oblast, more than 500 kilometers west of Kyiv. It is at the heart of the region that is hit especially hard with COVID-19.

As of March 18, four oblasts in western Ukraine, as well as the cities of Kyiv and Lviv, are in the "red zone" by the government's classification. They had to introduce lockdowns due to rising number of infections and, most importantly, a shortage of hospital beds.

oxygen mask. patients in the ward don't see the they know that he died and this
Although Stefurak and the other black body bag with their neighbor, scares some of them.

→ page 16

DNIPROPETROVSK REGION, PYATIKHATSKY AREA, VISHNEVE URBAN VILLAGE, CENTRAL STREET, 45A



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Agribusiness in Ukraine

Farmers need better irrigation to offset disastrous droughts

By Natalia Datskevych
datskevych@kyivpost.com

As a reminder of global climate change, the summer of 2020 in Ukraine was so dry that it turned into a catastrophe for many farmers in the country's southern regions.

Agriculturalists in Odesa Oblast alone lost around \$150 million as 300,000 hectares of crops failed. Several farmers, who saw their entire harvest wither, committed suicide.

"People were in despair," said Volodymyr Hvoslov, a farmer from Kherson Oblast. According to him, this could never have happened if the country's massive state-owned irrigation system of water channels, pipes, pumping stations and reservoirs had worked properly.

Built during the Soviet times and designed to water more than 2 million hectares of arable land from rivers and groundwater, the system covers only 530,000 hectares today, according to Ellina Yurchenko, a land expert at the Ukrainian Club of Agrarian Business.

The country loses up to \$2 billion per year due to an outdated and neglected irrigation system, which belongs to the government and is 80% worn out. In Mykolaiv and Odesa oblasts, it is barely working, according to Pavlo Koval, head of the Ukrainian Agrarian Confederation.

As climate change escalates, 70% of all 15 million hectares of the country's arable land may struggle from shortage of water by 2050. "There is an urgent need to restore and expand irrigated areas in Ukraine," said Yurchenko.

Hvoslov thinks farmers should have the legal right to install their own water supply system. Some farmers battling droughts risk investing in irrigation, even though most of them are lessees who don't own the land and can lose their investment.

Irrigation equipment stands in a field where sunflowers grow in Kherson Oblast on July 28, 2020. Last year Ukrainian farmers lost about \$4.3 billion, mainly in southern Ukrainian regions, due to droughts and outdated irrigation systems.



Ukrainian Agrarian Council

"Centralized water management only hinders investment and development of the business," Hvoslov said, adding that local farmers are waiting for a law to change that.

New hope

With the land market opening in July, a clear mechanism to water the land has become a top priority for Ukraine's government. On March 4, lawmakers submitted a long-awaited bill to remove the state's monopoly on irrigation and allow farmers to manage the water system themselves.

"The state realizes that this is the only way out of the problem," said Andriy Dykun, chairman of the Ukrainian Agrarian Council. "Business will buy land if it knows that the land can be irrigated. People started to think ahead not for

the coming year, but for the coming decades."

According to Roman Leshchenko, agriculture minister of Ukraine, for the past five years, the state only had enough money to pay irrigation workers' salaries — nothing was left for renovation. That will change, he promised.

"This year, we begin a large-scale irrigation project in Odesa Oblast," he told the Kyiv Post. According to him, the state will allocate \$92 million to the purpose.

"The adoption of the law will contribute to the country's decentralization processes," Leshchenko said. If the bill passes, he expects the EBRD and the World Bank to give Ukraine \$2 billion more.

Dykun from the Agrarian Council sees a deeper reason why the state did nothing for irrigation develop-

ment previously — "total corruption."

He observed it during the time of fugitive president Viktor Yanukovich, as well as during former president Petro Poroshenko's tenure. Every state agency position that controlled the irrigation system was full of "their own" people who just "took money from farmers."

As a result, farmers were forced to pay unreasonably high water tariffs, while not getting high-quality irrigation in return. Sometimes tariffs differed in neighbouring villages, depending on the greed of local officials.

"How could farmers compete if the basic resource is supplied at different prices?" said Koval.

With the new government, farmers hope that unfair water tariffs won't be a problem anymore. "Time has changed, the power in the country has changed, and there's a chance that everything will change," said Dykun.

New law

The new law, if adopted, will allow farmers to create water user cooperatives, nonprofits with the right to manage and modernize pumping stations.

Cooperatives will be able to set optimal water tariffs to reach two goals at once — avoid overburdening farmers financially, while having enough money to invest into the irrigation system.

With new rules, crop yield may grow by 30–50%, farmer Hvoslov believes.

At the same time, the irrigation system, as a strategic asset, will still be state-owned — it won't be possi-

ble to privatize it. The state water agency will still operate main water channels and major water pipes.

Industry experts expect that the parliament will adopt the bill this year.

"Everybody understands that there's a real need not to delay the adoption of the law," said Koval. "There are still buildings and water canals, but if private investment does not come there under normal conditions, nothing will change" and they will stay outdated.

On his farm in Kherson Oblast, Hvoslov has already spent \$6 million on new irrigation equipment and water pipes for 3,000 out of 14,000 hectares his company operates.

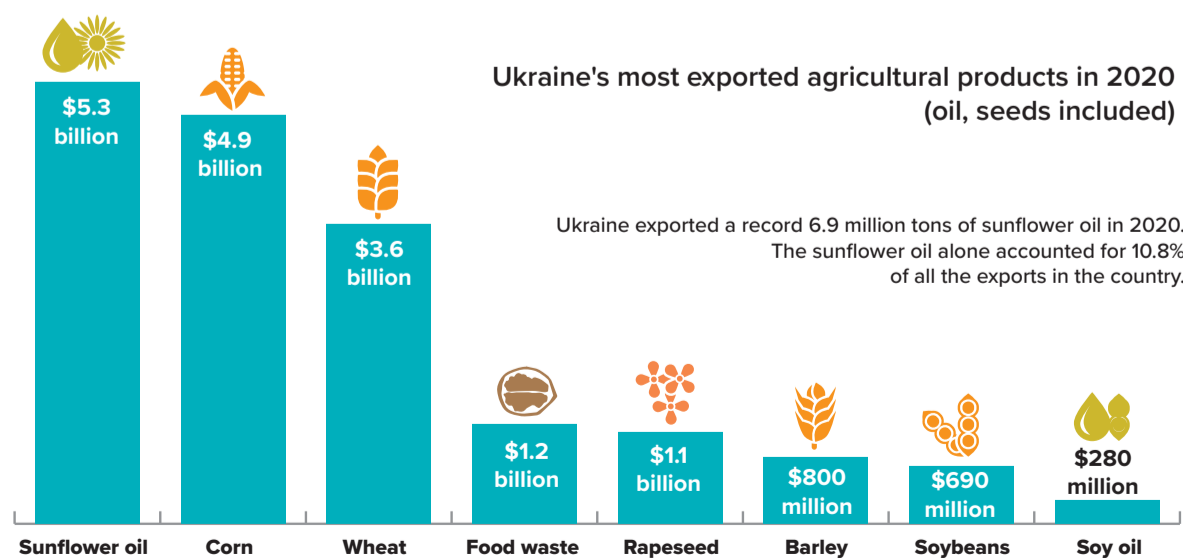
"It's expensive to do, but business realizes that it is necessary to increase productivity," said Dykun. On average, agriculture companies pay \$2,500–3,000 per hectare to make proper irrigation.

This investment comes with a risk. Since many farmers lease land, the owners can do anything they want with the water pipes, even dig them up from the ground.

The new law would eliminate this risk, since pipes will be officially registered and managed as a part of the irrigation system. "We just want to legalize what has already been done by private businesses," said Dykun.

Koval believes that today, water for irrigation is becoming as valuable as land itself, especially, in central and southern regions, where Ukraine's famously fertile black soil may soon degrade without proper care.

"Without water, land does not work," said Koval. ☐



Source: State Customs Service

Ukraine can feed the world



Roman Leshchenko

Editor's Note: This op-ed was originally published by the Atlantic Council and is reprinted with permission.

Ukraine is currently undergoing a historic transformation that will be felt throughout the world. The globally significant progress I am referring to is agricultural land reform.

For centuries, Ukraine has been known as "the breadbasket of Europe." This title is entirely accurate, given that Ukraine is home to around a quarter of the world's super-fertile "chernozem" or "black soil."

However, Ukrainians have not been able to fully capitalize on these agricultural riches during the thirty years since the country gained independence. Instead, independent Ukraine became one of only six nations globally without an agricul-

tural land market, joining the likes of North Korea and Venezuela.

Thankfully, the situation is now being transformed and Ukraine is gearing up to take its rightful place as an agricultural superpower.

42 million hectares

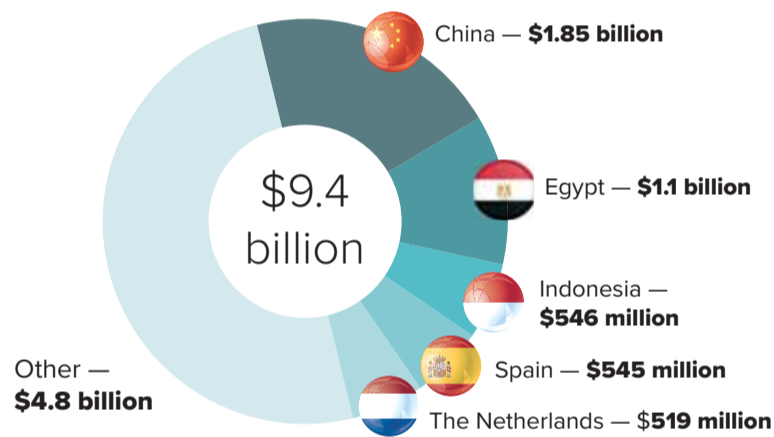
The untapped potential of Ukraine's agricultural sector is staggering. The country boasts around 42 million hectares of agricultural land. At present, 32 million hectares are cultivated annually, representing an area larger than Italy. Given the size and fertility of the country's farmland, together with the vast scope for increased harvests and greater efficiency through ongoing modernization, it is no exaggeration to state that Ukraine can feed the world.

Ukraine is already among the top three grain exporters and a world leader in areas such as soybeans



A combine harvester gathers grain from a field in Kharkiv Oblast on July 10, 2020. Ukraine is home to around a quarter of the world's super-fertile "black soil." However, Ukrainians have not been able to fully capitalize on these agricultural riches.

Biggest importers of Ukraine's crops in 2020



Asian countries, mainly China, were among top importers of Ukraine's agricultural products. Their share accounted for 45% in 2020. At the same time, the European Union's share was 29%.

Source: State Customs Service

and sunflower oil. Ukrainian agricultural exports enjoy a growing profile in key global markets like China, Egypt, India, Turkey, and across the European Union.

Middle East promising

The countries of the Middle East represent a particularly promising focus for Ukrainian agricultural exporters. This was evident during President Volodymyr Zelensky's February 2021 visit to the United Arab Emirates, where agriculture trade featured prominently in a range of signed memorandums and agreements worth around \$3 billion.

Looking ahead, Ukraine aims to provide food security for the UAE as well as a number of other countries in the region including Saudi Arabia and Qatar.

Ukraine has also demonstrated huge promise in some of the world's fastest-growing agricultural niche markets. Today, Ukraine is among the top three exporters of organic products to the EU. We plan to achieve similar organic market penetration in the United States and across Asia. Organic products can serve as one of the engines driving the future development of Ukraine's agricultural sector.

These ambitious goals are entirely realistic but they require a sensible and modern approach to the evolution of Ukraine's agricultural industry. Since achieving independence in 1991, Ukraine has never established a functioning agricultural land market. Instead, an official moratorium on the sale of agricultural land was

introduced in 2001, when I was just 13 years old.

Farm roots

I grew up in a farming family in rural Ukraine where life revolved around agriculture. My parents and everyone else in the community who rented out land soon came to the conclusion that the moratorium was a way of stealing land. However, there were no legal mechanisms available to us that could protect against the arbitrariness of corrupt officials.

When I became head of the state agency responsible for the use of land resources, I carried out an inventory of state-owned lands. At least five million hectares had sim-

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Advertisement

Lactalis in Ukraine: 25 years of sustainable development

The Lactalis Group is a French family company with almost 90 years of history. With 266 plants in 55 countries and more than 85,000 employees worldwide, the Group is one of the world's biggest dairy products manufacturers that owns such well-known international brands as Président, Galbani and Parmalat. Lactalis Ukraine is one of the important divisions of Lactalis Group in Eastern Europe.

The history of Lactalis* in Ukraine started on February 15, 1996. With a strong belief in the agricultural and industrial potential of our country, the Group established a joint French-Ukrainian enterprise with Mykolayiv Municipal Dairy Plant. At first, it only produced butter and casein but later on, the product range was broadened to include all the traditional dairy products.

As the Lactalis Group entered the Ukrainian market, it made a significant impact on the development of the country's dairy industry. Not only had the Group become the first foreign investor in dairy products manufacture in our country, but it had also implemented numerous innovations. It was the first dairy producer to start financing the procurement of raw materials through the establishment of milk collection points in villages equipped with mini-laboratories and coolers. Also, it financed and fully supported the establishment of dairy farms that meet European standards and produce raw materials of the highest quality. As a result of a complete technical and technological re-equipment of the Mykolaiv plant, the company had set high quality standards in the Ukrainian market and won the reputation as the most innovative manufacturer of dairy products.



The year of 2007 was marked with another milestone of the Group's development in Ukraine, as it acquired the plant "Molochny Dim LLC" in Pavlohrad, one of Ukraine's leading UHT milk producers.

HACCP, a certified integrated management system for quality and food safety according to ISO standards, was implemented in the Ukrainian manufacturing sites to ensure the highest quality and food safety of our products. The highly effective product tracking program covers all the production chain for strict control from raw materials to finished products.

In 2016, the company was the first to receive Government approval for dairy products export to the European Union, which became another proof of high quality and safety of Lactalis products. Since

2017, the company has held a prominent position among the Ukrainian dairy manufacturers which export their products for the final consumer. The excellent quality and perfect taste of Ukrainian products are highly appreciated by the consumers in 25 countries all over the world.

Today, Lactalis manufacturing sites in Ukraine produce almost 250 products under the brands Président, Dolce, Lactonia, Lactel, Fanny and LokoMoko. The company employs more than 750 employees in different regions of the country.

Lactalis adheres to international employment standards and provides possibilities for professional development to its employees, especially the youth.

"People and brands are the key values of our company," says Renato Rusczyk, CEO of Lactalis-Ukraine. The company delivers more than 100 trainings per year, and encourages mentoring and expertise sharing, including international exchange programs for interested personnel, especially young people. In 2020, Lactalis-Ukraine for the second time committed itself to promoting the talents, practical skills and opportunities for young professionals by signing "The Pact For Youth — 2025."

Today, as a quarter century ago, our company sets ambitious goals and confidently conquers the new heights, using the core values and principles of our Group: by producing delicious and healthy dairy products, we unite people all over the world!

*Renamed from Besnier in 1999.

Farmers harness drones to work fields and reap better harvests

By Daryna Antoniuk
antoniuk@kyivpost.com

It's not an unusual sight now when a drone soars over Kyiv to take aerial shots of urban landscapes for business or for fun.

Drones have become so mainstream in recent years that even big firms have turned their eyes to the sky. Agricultural companies are among them.

Drones flying over the fields can see the exact size of the farmland and pinpoint spots where plants lack water, light or fertilizers. With this data, farmers can analyze what their crops require to give maximum yields.

Experts say that Ukraine is one of the most favorable markets in Europe to use agricultural drones, as the country barely regulates their use.

The size of the Ukrainian drone market reached \$18 million in 2020 and is expected to grow to \$36 million in 2021, according to Taras Troiak, founder of Quadro.ua, a company that sells drones by Chinese brand DJI.

But unlike in China or the United States, drones haven't yet become popular with Ukrainian farmers — only 30% of the drone market relies on farmers. As the hardware gets cheaper, more local entrepreneurs will step in to give their farms a high-tech boost, experts say.

'Not a toy anymore'

Farmers usually choose between two types of drones: a multi-rotor drone, also called quadcopter, which is small and easy to use; and a fixed-wing drone, which looks like a small plane and can fly farther and faster on a single battery charge.

For farmers, quadcopters are more convenient — they can maneuver across fields and take off anywhere, according to Artem Belenkov, founder of Ukrainian company SmartFarming that helps agriculture firms adopt new technology.

Quadcopters are also cheaper than fixed-wing machines. A DJI quadcopter costs \$10,400, while a fixed-wing drone by French manufacturer SenseFly goes for \$15,800.

All drones have GPS, sensors and



A man launches an agricultural drone that uses sensors, GPS and camera to analyze fields. Ukraine is one of the most favorable markets in Europe to use agricultural drones, as the country hardly regulates their use.

cameras that can detect problems that are otherwise hard to notice. Drones collect so much data that farmers often hire specialists to analyze it, using artificial intelligence and other software. They can even spot weeds or infected plants.

Some companies use drones to spray pesticides, fertilizers and water. It's more precise and effective than doing it manually or using tractors that can harm crops and soil, according to Belenkov.

But a simple drone from an electronics store that isn't equipped for the aforementioned services has no value to the farmer, said Valerii Iakovenko, founder of DroneUA, a Ukrainian company that sells drones and helps use them.

"Drone is just a piece of metal that costs nothing until it solves a problem," Iakovenko said.

That's why farmers often just rent the right drones, according to Yaroslav Movchun, co-owner of berry farm Ozeryana in Zhytomyr Oblast.

On his farm, Movchun uses a drone manufactured by Ukrainian company FlyingTractor. One unit sells for nearly \$14,500.

The drone makes it easy for Movchun to fertilize the soil on time and with the right dose of chemicals — no traditional tractor can give the same precision.

"Drones are very convenient. It is a question of time when our farmers realize that is not a toy anymore," Movchun told the Kyiv Post.

Foreign dominance

The Ukrainian drone market is ruled over by foreign behemoths like Chinese DJI and XAG.

According to Troiak, DJI controls 70% of the market. Most Ukrainians use drones for filmmaking or entertainment. About 30% of the drones DJI sells in Ukraine is used in industry; specific drones that spray fertilizers secure 15% of the company's sales here.

Companies renting or selling drones usually import them because it's hard to compete with well-established brands even when the price is right, according to Iakovenko.

When Iakovenko and his partner Fevzi Ametov entered the drone business in 2014, they built their own agricultural drone that cost \$2,400 — nearly 10 times less than imported drones.

However, their startup couldn't compete with well-marketed Chinese brands like DJI, so Iakovenko started importing drones, selling them in Ukraine and offering services like data analytics.

The company attracted clients from various industries, including energy, telecommunications and real estate. Agricultural giants Myronivsky Hliboproduct, Kernel, energy giant DTEK and mobile operator Vodafone are among its clients.

Big firms were the first to see the potential of using drones in Ukraine, Iakovenko said. But later on, small and medium-sized farms caught up and now they drive Ukraine's drone market, as they're faster to implement new tech.

Some farmers buy Ukrainian-made drones too, but according to Belenkov, Ukrainian manufacturers are dying out.

Ukraine ramped up drone production in 2014 when the war with Russia hit the eastern part of the

country. Back then, they were mostly used as a military tool. But as firms like Ukrspesystems started making drones for farmers, they lost the competition with foreign brands.

Soft regulation

Ukraine doesn't regulate drones as strictly as Europe, but their owners still must follow some rules.

For example, drones cannot fly in certain regions of Ukraine like Crimea and the Donbas, which are occupied by Russia. The local government also wants to apply more restrictions to agricultural drones that spray pesticides and fertilizers in the fields, worrying that they can harm people's health.

Overall, however, it's more difficult to bring drones to Ukraine than to use them here, according to Iakovenko.

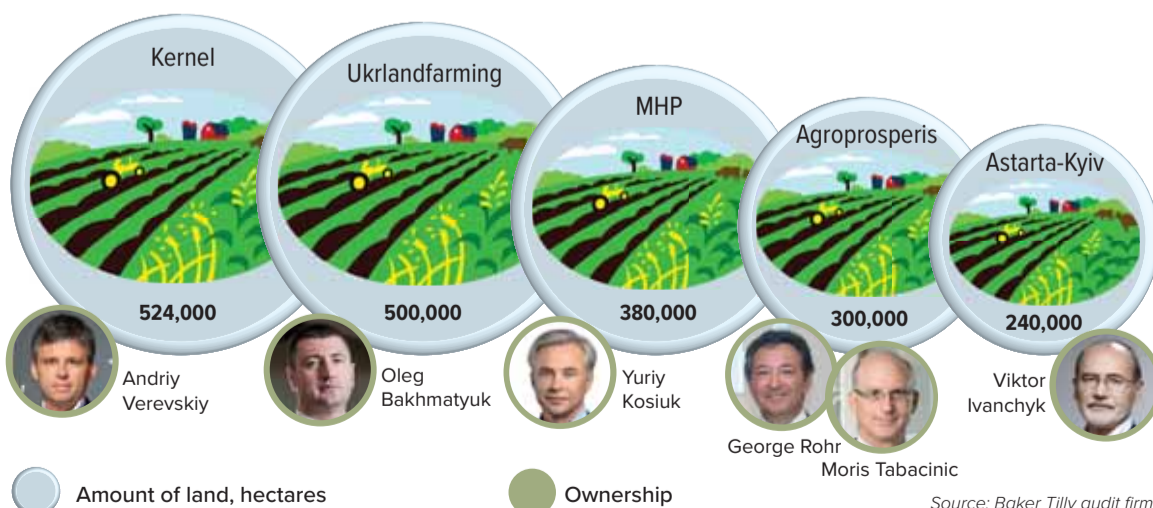
Given that many drones are big and some had previously been used for military purposes, firms like DroneUA need permits from Ukraine's customs service to import them. Local authorities have to check whether drones can be used as a weapon, Iakovenko said.

It usually takes up to 30 days to get a permit and up to 45 days to check whether drones can work without interfering with other electronic devices.

"Drones are complicated cargo. Importing them is a challenge but we have to deal with it," Iakovenko said. He thinks there's no other way really if Ukrainian farmers want to stay competitive.

"Ukrainian farmers cannot work without drones now: they save time, they recognize problems, they help make decisions faster." ❖

Top agriculture companies operating in Ukraine by amount of land



In 2020, Ukraine's biggest agriculture firm Kernel exported a record 8 million tons of grain. Its share in total grain exports reached 13.3%. With a fortune of \$360 million, Kernel's founder Andriy Verevskyi is one of the richest Ukrainians, according to Forbes.

UNIAN

A combine unloads sunflower seeds on a field on Sept. 5, 2019 in Kharkiv Oblast. Sunflower oil is the most exported agricultural product in Ukraine. In 2020, Ukraine exported \$5.3 billion worth of sunflower oil.



BUSINESS ADVISER

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Ukreximbank employs the widest possible range of financial instruments to support agrarian business

In 2020, cereal production in Ukraine totaled 65.4 million tons of grain and leguminous crops from the area of 15.3 million hectares, 12.9% down from 75.1 million tons in 2019 from the area of 14.8 million hectares, according to the Ministry of Economy. Unfavorable weather conditions, in particular drought, primarily in the southern regions of the country, were the main reasons behind the production decline. Low yield was compensated by the price increase in the global markets. For example, the FAO Cereal Price Index averaged 125.7 points in February 2021, up 26.5% from February 2020. Growth of prices for cereals compensated for the yield decrease, and provided additional profit to those farmers, who did not suffer from drought. At that, the impact of COVID-19 on the agrarian enterprises is estimated by the experts as minimal. Nonetheless, the volume of capital investment in agriculture in 2020 dropped almost 50%, to UAH 36 million, according to the National Scientific Center "Institute of Agrarian Economics". On the one hand, economic issues of the agrarian producers had an impact on the situation, while on the other hand, agrarian producers were saving money in anticipation of the land market opening.



Oleksandr Isniuk,
Director of Corporate Banking
Department (private enterprises),
JSC Ukreximbank

In 2020, JSC Ukreximbank continued to actively support the sector, both in the corporate segment, which is the key segment for the bank, and in the dynamically growing segment of small and medium enterprises, including through participation in the government programs of financial support of the agroindustrial complex, 5-7-9 Program, and also acting as an agent and lending bank within the framework of the government guarantee program on portfolio basis. The bank offers its clients working capital financing (financing of the agricultural cycle), as well as loans for the implementation of investment projects (acquisition of agricultural machinery, equipment for silos, port terminals, construction of the river fleet, etc.), including within the joint programs with IBRD, EBRD, EIB, and also through leasing. Working capital financing is provided for the term of 12-18 months, taking into account the production cycle of the borrowers; investment loans are issued for 3-5 years (depending on the project investment return period). The use of the full range of trade finance transactions is one of the strong suits of the banks: availing commodity promissory notes, providing guarantees, letters of credit, factoring, etc. In addition to the full range of the services, taking into account gained experience, the bank offers agrarian exporting companies such exclusive products as post-export financing services (negotiation), which allows for receiving earnings early, after product shipment, by providing Ukreximbank with documents on the letter of credit.



The Ministry of Economy forecasts that the 2021 gross cereal production will return to the level of the record-high 2019 – 75 million from the area of 15.7 million hectares, and, accordingly, grain exports volumes will also increase. Expanding their business, the agrarian producers of the country can always count on the support of a reliable financial partner – state-owned Ukreximbank.

Roman Leshchenko: Ukraine becomes an agricultural giant

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ply disappeared since the start of the moratorium. Unscrupulous officials had handed this land over to developers in exchange for illicit payments. This is how the shadow land market of recent decades made Ukrainians poorer while generating obscene wealth for a small group of corrupt officials and their associates.

Many in the agricultural sector fought for years to end the moratorium. In March 2020, the Ukrainian parliament finally voted for agricultural land reform and canceled the moratorium. Thanks to this historic decision, seven million Ukrainian landowners received the right to use their land at their own discretion.

This breakthrough is just the beginning. Due to public fears and concerns fueled by those who benefited most from the moratorium, the reform bill of spring 2020 was highly conservative. With time, as people begin to see the advantages of a functioning agricultural land market and develop a sense of trust towards

the new rules and regulations of the market, further changes will be introduced. Eventually, Ukrainians will be invited to take part in a national referendum on the issue of allowing foreign citizens to purchase agricultural land.

Safeguards will remain in place to make sure the reforms bring benefits to ordinary Ukrainians rather than the country's billionaire class. These measures include limits on the amount of land any one individual can purchase.

In parallel to the emergence of an agricultural land market, we are also developing instruments to provide affordable financing for Ukrainian agribusinesses. In cooperation with the National Bank of Ukraine, farmers will be able to access loans at competitive rates to finance upgrades in machinery along with the purchase of quality seed and fertilizer. The Ukrainian parliament is currently working on an Agricultural Loan Partial Guarantee Fund, which will provide assistance to small and medium-sized farms.

At every stage of land reform implementation, we are guided by what we term as the 3D formula: deregulation, de-shadowing, and digitization. We aim to collect information about all the country's natural resources, including agricultural land, via satellite. This will be made available online as part of our commitment to transparency and digitization.

Recently adopted legislation governing concessions and public-private partnerships will help to upgrade Ukraine's infrastructure and boost the country's ability to transport larger volumes of crops and value-added agricultural produce to global markets. Meanwhile, river traffic reforms passed in late 2020 will enable Ukraine's Dnipro River to regain its historic role as one of Europe's great waterways and serve as an increasingly important route for agricultural exports.

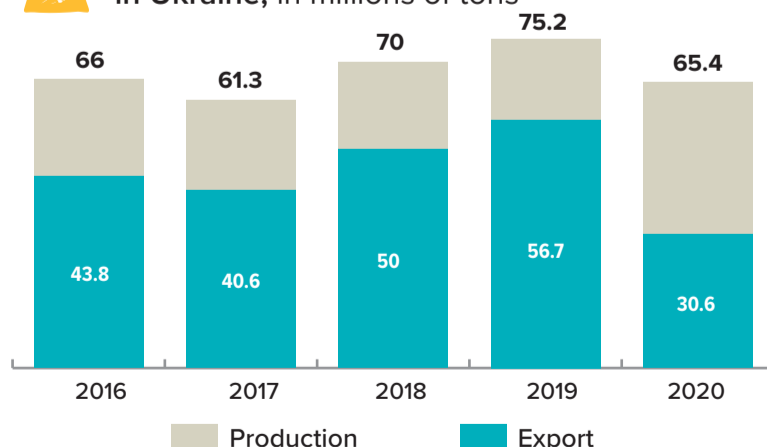
Last year's agricultural land reform was a watershed moment in modern Ukrainian history, but experience elsewhere in the region indicates that the development of the market will continue for many years to come. In neighboring Poland, for example, land reform has been underway for the past 15 years. The process will evolve similarly in Ukraine, taking into account the country's changing social and economic circumstances.

At every stage of this process, we will work to make sure Ukrainians are protected from the greed of tycoons and corrupt officials. The government will never lose sight of the central idea that Ukraine's farmlands are the nation's greatest asset. In the years ahead, this will leave Ukraine well placed to assume an ever-greater role in global food security. Ukrainians will finally reap the benefits of the country's legendary fertility, and the whole world will come to know Ukraine as a land of unrivaled agricultural riches.

Roman Leshchenko is Ukraine's agricultural minister. 🇺🇦



Grain production and export in Ukraine, in millions of tons



Source: State Fiscal Service of Ukraine

In 2019, Ukrainian farmers produced 75.2 million tons of grain. In 2020, production fell by 15% due to the coronavirus pandemic and extremely dry weather.

Weak start to farmland sales will not boost economy much

By Liliane Bivings
bivings@kyivpost.com

This July Ukraine will open an agricultural land market for the first time in its 30 years of independence. But the transition to the truly free land market may take time.

The 20-year moratorium on farmland sales meant that more than seven million Ukrainians couldn't freely buy and sell the land they own, which is about 40 million hectares.

Ukraine passed a law to lift the ban in 2020 and the changes are coming into force this summer. There's a problem though – the partial steps are unlikely to bring swift economic growth.

Instead of giving every person and company the right to trade the land right away, the law will allow only individual Ukrainian citizens to buy land. They can buy no more than 100 hectares if the land isn't government-owned.

Ukrainian companies, in turn, can start trading farmland only in 2023, limited to purchasing no more than 100,000 hectares. Foreigners will be able to purchase land only after a national referendum, not earlier than in 2024.

All these restrictions are meant to give priority to small local farmers over large agribusiness, so they can obtain enough land to start their own businesses; they will help avoid the excessive concentration of land in the hands of a few.

At the same time, the limitations mean Ukraine won't see the benefits of the land reform right away.

Before it opens

Before the land market opens on July 1, Ilona Sologoub, CEO of VoxUkraine, says there are several



A man plows a field in Kyiv Oblast on April 25, 2020. This July Ukraine will open an agricultural land market, allowing individual Ukrainian citizens to buy and sell land. Foreigners will be able to purchase land only after a national referendum, not earlier than in 2024.

laws that Ukraine's parliament has yet to adopt that are necessary to avoid abuses.

Among them are laws that ensure transparency in land auctions, empower local communities by transferring state land to local authorities, and protect landowners from predatory landlords.

These laws are also necessary conditions for receiving further financial support from the World Bank. Ukraine's parliament was scheduled to vote on these laws by March 19.

There are concerns, however, that opposing political forces may prevent the market from opening in July.

Political opposition has been fierce. Yulia Tymoshenko's 24-member Batkivshchyna and Vadim Rabinovich's pro-Kremlin, 44-member Opposition Bloc – For Life parties have already said that they'll be challenging the law in the Constitutional Court.

Yaroslav Zhelezniak, a lawmaker with the 20-member Holos party, is afraid those who are against land reform may try to extend the moratorium. It is unlikely that the opposition has enough votes in parliament to do so, but it is a risk, he says.

Their opposition has already drastically shaped public opinion about the opening of the land market.

When the Kyiv International Institute of Sociology asked respondents in a survey in 2018, if they believe that Ukrainian citizens should have the right to freely sell their land, 66.3% responded yes.

But when they asked respondents in another survey how they would vote today on a referendum regarding the question of a land market in Ukraine, 72% of the respondents said they would vote against.

Zhelezniak believes that once people understand there's nothing bad in trading the land, more of them will support the reform. When moratorium is gone and if nothing extremely bad happens, "it will be a huge argument against politicians who were (criticizing) the moratorium," Zhelezniak says.

Protecting small farmers

Despite these political hurdles, Oleg Nivievskyi, assistant professor at the Kyiv School of Economics, isn't worried about the market opening in July.

Five million hectares of land are already traded in Ukraine and the parliament adopted a law to make the work of State Geo Cadastre more transparent. Thus, the existing infrastructure makes it possible for

the land market to open without any technical obstacles, Nivievskyi says.

At the same time, with the current version of the law, small farmers may find it difficult to access the necessary financing to compete with the medium and large-sized farmers that have more capital to buy and invest in land.

Ukraine's parliament has created an Agricultural Loan Partial Guarantee Fund to provide affordable financing to small and medium-sized farmers, but even optimistically, the government won't be able to launch the fund until 2022, Nivievskyi says.

In Ukraine, small farmers generally cultivate their own land, whereas

medium and large farmers lease several plots of land from different landowners.

Small farmers have been largely neglected from agricultural policy-making in Ukraine. Under the moratorium, they could not use their land as collateral to take out loans and increase production, opposed to medium and large farmers who have had other ways of attracting finance.

Anders Aslund, senior resident fellow at the Atlantic Council, also wonders about who exactly will benefit from land sales in the future, when big corporations and foreigners are allowed to buy it, too. There's a risk big investors will buy the land to accumulate more assets but won't invest in it, Aslund says.

No land for foreigners

Of the several restrictions under the current version of the law, the exclusion of foreigners buying land has been the source of much debate.

A chief economic adviser to Ukraine's prime minister, Alexander Rodnyansky, has said that the government's decision to ban foreigners from participating in the market will slow investment, help Ukraine's oligarchs and hurt growth.

Considering how opposition rhetoric has shaped public opinion on the land market, the outcome of any national referendum is practically a foregone conclusion.

Lawmaker Zhelezniak is sure there will never be a referendum on foreigners buying land and that someday a future parliament will change this provision. Sologoub agrees that while the current parliament never will, "perhaps a future one will".

Nivievskyi says that even if a

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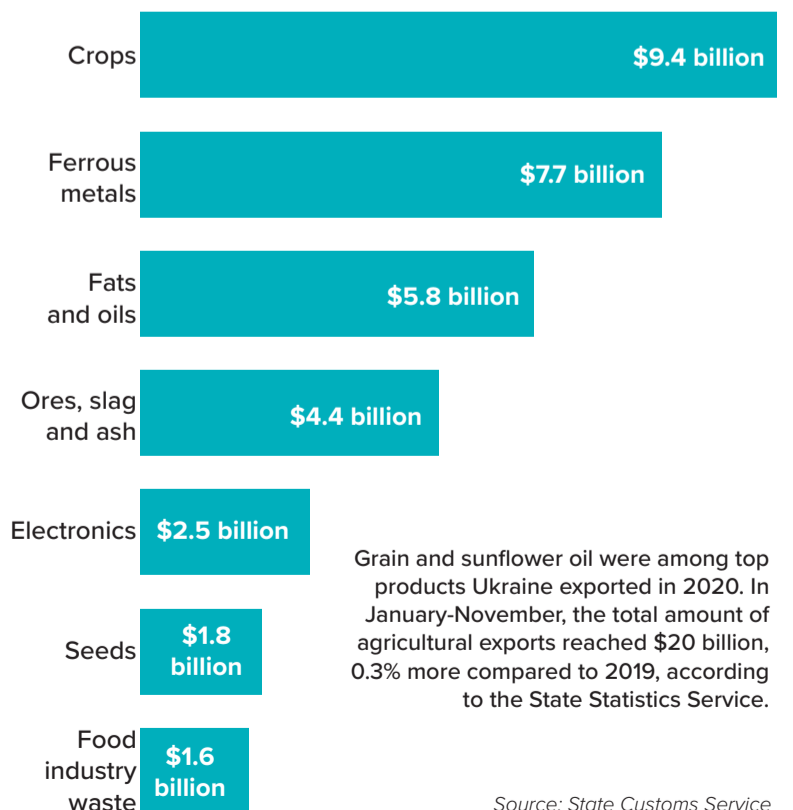
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Ukraine's top exports in 2020



Source: State Customs Service

Opposition politicians say they will fight farmland sales in Constitutional Court

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referendum proved victorious for the foreign purchase of land, under the current version of the law, foreigners will never be able to own land within 50 kilometers of the border. This, Nivievskiy says, knocks out about a third of Ukraine's territory available for foreign investment.

Instead, foreigners will own land through legal entities with various

capital structures, which, according to Nivievskiy, makes it really easy to conceal the ultimate beneficiary. "Good for foreigners, a nightmare for Ukraine's administration of tracking down these transactions."

But foreign investment is "a good thing" anyway, Nivievskiy added.

'Start small'

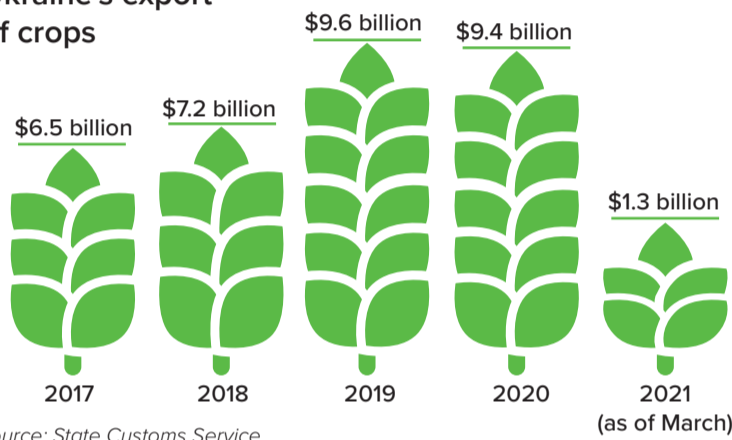
Ukraine's government has boasted that lifting the ban on land sales will



Volodymyr Petrov

People hold placards in front of the Ukrainian parliament building on Nov. 12, 2019 in Kyiv to support the creation of a private agricultural land market. Ukraine passed a law to lift the moratorium on farmland sales in 2020 and the changes are coming into force this summer.

Ukraine's export of crops



Source: State Customs Service

add two-three percentage points of GDP growth in the first year.

Given the restrictions in the law and various challenges, it is unlikely that major changes in the ownership structure of agricultural land will happen on a large scale in the next few years.

Aslund guesses there will be little movement right away. "People will be suspicious," of the market, being afraid of being cheated, he said. Besides, Ukrainian may not want to sell their land because its price is too low.

The law freezes the price of land until 2030, and sets it at \$900–\$1,100 per hectare, which is a few thousand dollars below what it should be, according to Aslund.

Nivievskiy, on the other hand, thinks "people will jump at the opportunity to buy land."

He noted that intensive discussions surrounding land reform have been going on for the past five years, during which agribusinesses have been accumulating resources. Now it is ready to use them.

He noted there has been a lot

of enthusiasm, evidenced particularly by the Ukrainian Agricultural Business Club's recent creation of a "land club" with the specific purpose of getting everyone ready.

But experts agree that a slow transition to a land market is actually a good thing.

"When you're starting a new market, you should start small to see what works and what doesn't, what legal changes will arise and how to respond to them," Nivievskiy says. "I hope that the first year will be a showcase for the future." 🇺🇦

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Has fugitive Firtash co-opted Austria's leaders to block US?

By Oleksiy Sorokin
sorokin@kyivpost.com

Austrian Chancellor Sebastian Kurz used a private jet linked to fugitive oligarch Dmytro Firtash to travel from a high-profile meeting in Tel-Aviv.

The young Austrian chancellor isn't the first Austrian politician caught in bed with the Kremlin-linked oligarch, who is fighting off a U.S. extradition warrant.

The U.S. has charged Firtash with bribery and racketeering.

According to Austrian news website ZackZack, Firtash lives in a Vienna villa owned by Alexander Schutz, a major donor to Kurz's governing Austrian People's Party.

The website also writes that the party's former leader, Michael Spindelegger, who is also Austria's ex-vice chancellor, is employed by the oligarch's Agency for the Modernization of Ukraine, which exists only on paper.

Firtash's connections to the top echelons of Austrian politics aren't surprising. The oligarch made his fortune on mingling with political heavyweights.

Firtash, who was described by the U.S. Department of Justice as an "upper-echelon (associate) of Russian organized crime," made a fortune on reselling Russian gas to Ukraine at inflated prices. He soon expanded his reach under President Viktor Yanukovich, becoming Ukraine's main fertilizer producer and energy distributor.

Private flight

Kurz's travel caught the eye of Austrian investigative journalists when he used an unconventional method to travel home from Tel Aviv.

On March 4, Kurz tagged along with Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen for a meeting with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to discuss COVID-19 vaccination.

On the same day, Kurz took a private jet home.

According to ZackZack, the jet



Oligarch Dmytro Firtash arrives at a public hearing at the Austrian Supreme Court in Vienna on June 25, 2019. The court ruled to extradite Firtash to the U.S., however the oligarch successfully petitioned for a retrial citing new evidence.

belongs to Avcon Jet AG, which operates at least 19 private planes. After dropping Kurz off in Vienna, the OE-IRK plane traveled to Kyiv.

Although Firtash isn't allowed to leave Austria, he has regularly paid for "aviation services."

According to ZackZack, Firtash's PR manager Daniel Kapp said that the aircraft used by Austrian Chancellor Kurz is owned by "a company that can belong to Firtash but is operated autonomously by a third party."

Kurz's office told ZackZack that the plane was booked for the chancellor, which is a "standard process," adding that "who owns the aircraft is beyond our knowledge and of no relevance."

Toxic oligarch

Firtash's rise to power was intertwined with political intrigue. Now, residing in Austria, he sticks to the strategy that brought him billions.

Firtash first entered the spotlight in 2006 when it was revealed that the low-profile businessman stood behind 45 percent of a gas supply company called RosUkrEnergO which was the sole gas intermediary between Central Asia, Russia, Ukraine and Europe.

The other 50 percent was owned by the Russia's state-owned Gazprom.

At some points, the Swiss-registered RosUkrEnergO made as much as \$2.5 billion per year.

Firtash's rise has been attributed to his ties to Semion Mogilevich, an infamous Kyiv-born organized crime boss, who was for several years one of the Federal Bureau of Investigation's 10 most wanted fugitives. Firtash denies ties to Mogilevich.

Russia sold gas to Ukraine through RosUkrEnergO for five years, earning Firtash billions of dollars.

After RosUkrEnergO was sidelined in 2009, Firtash was already a well-established Ukrainian oligarch.

In 2010, he sided with pro-Kremlin President Yanukovich and became one of the most influential people in the country.

Firtash's Group DF accumulated vast assets in chemical production, banking and gas distribution. He also bought InterMedia Group, owning the biggest TV viewership share at that time.

Today, Firtash has enormous influence in Ukraine, even from exile. He has a gas distribution monopoly in Ukraine and his companies owe the state at least \$2 billion for natural gas, allegations that Group DF dismisses as rumors.

Firtash controls a substantial part of the titanium market and has vast chemical plant holdings.

He also remains on good terms with pro-Kremlin politicians in Ukraine, having business ties with Serhiy Lyovochkin, co-leader of the 44-member Opposition Platform – For Life faction.

Lyovochkin co-owns Inter Media Group.

Recently, Ukraine began to fight back.

In 2019, the Anti-Monopoly Committee of Ukraine ordered a break-up of Firtash's monopoly in the nitrogen fertilizer sector. In December, the Anti-Monopoly Committee fined Firtash's regional gas distribution companies Hr 380 million (\$14 million) for abusing their monopoly position.

US charges

Ukraine isn't the only country poisoned by Firtash's schemes.

In June 2013, Firtash was charged by a Chicago grand jury with giving \$18.5 million in bribes to Indian government officials to receive titanium mining licenses with the aim of selling the extracted minerals to Boeing.

The indictment was made public in April 2014. Firtash has not been able to leave Vienna since he was arrested in his mansion at the request of the FBI in March 2014.

However, Firtash was able to stall the pending extradition.

In June 2019, Firtash lost his extradition appeal in Austria's Supreme Court. He was subject to be transferred to the U.S. after Austria's justice minister approved his extradition. Yet on the same day, Firtash's defense filed a motion for a retrial, citing new evidence.

Meanwhile, Firtash is making important connections in his new hometown of Vienna.

Firtash's high-caliber legal team employs Austrian former Justice Minister Dieter Bohmdorfer, while his PR manager Kapp used to work as a spokesperson for another former Austrian People's Party leader – Josef Pröll – who also served as Austria's vice chancellor. ❖

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Experts: Green debts discourage investors in Ukraine's renewables

By Liza Semko
semko@kyivpost.com

To get its renewable energy sector jump-started, Ukraine began luring investors with a high guaranteed price for the solar and wind energy that they produced. It worked spectacularly – until it didn't.

The share of Ukraine's energy from renewables rose from almost nothing to more than 10%, particularly with several billion dollars of fresh investment in 2018 and 2019.

But in 2020, the government realized it couldn't afford its promises to pay the high green tariff in place. The agreement, in place until 2029, would have cost taxpayers \$20 billion by the end of the decade. The amount represents 40% of Ukraine's annual state budget.

Instead of being the cheapest source of energy to the electrical grid, the high green tariff made Ukraine's renewable energy the most expensive.

So the government simply stopped paying the investors and came to an agreement with many of them on a future tariff cut. But the state still owes the private investors \$600 million, a sum that it is paying off slowly and gradually.

The government's backtracking threatens to halt future investment in green energy in Ukraine, according to experts participating in a Kyiv Post webinar titled "Renewable Energy: The Future of Ukraine" on March 17.

According to Oleksiy Feliv, managing partner at the Integrites law firm, eight international financial institutions have already suspended financing of Ukraine's renewables because of the debts.

International donors like the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development won't be lending money to the renewable power developers if the state doesn't fulfil its obligations, Feliv said.

Ukraine should find a way to pay off the amount, Feliv said, or risk not meeting its commitment to stop net emissions of greenhouse gases – the chief culprit in global warming – by 2050. The carbon-neutrality pledge within 30 years is one that 126 nations have taken and expansion of renewable energy is considered the only way to achieve the goal.

Minister's pledge

Yuriy Vitrenko, acting energy minister, says Ukraine won't have enough money to pay off all debts from the state budget, which has "limited capacity."

Vitrenko suggested that the debts

Pavlo Podufalov



Experts at Kyiv Post Legal Talks during the webinar "Renewable Energy: The Future of Ukraine" hosted by the Kyiv Post and Integrites law firm on March 17, 2021. From left: Brian Bonner, Kyiv Post chief editor; Yuriy Vitrenko, Ukraine's acting energy minister; Inna Sovsun, member of parliament; Magnus Johansen, vice president of NBT Ukraine; and Oleksiy Feliv, managing partner of Integrites. Participating remotely were Maris Kunickis, CEO of DTEK Renewables and Adrien Fouchet, EuroCape country manager.

could be repaid by increasing the carbon tax by 30 times – from \$0.4 to \$11 per ton of carbon dioxide emission. Even with the hike, the tax will remain three times lower than in the European Union. Another way is to issue state bonds to cover debts to investors.

Vitrenko is confident of a solution – and an end to guaranteed tariffs, which are no longer in place in many parts of the world as the costs of solar and wind power continue to plummet. "Then we'll stimulate development of renewables without any subsidies, in a way the market works," Vitrenko says.

Investors' concerns

The Cabinet of Ministers signed a memorandum with renewable producers last year, pledging to pay off 40% of the debt in 2020 and 60% in 2021.

DTEK Renewables, a subsidiary of Ukraine's largest energy firm DTEK, has received only a small fraction of what it is owed. "We don't see any movements," Maris Kunickis, CEO of DTEK Renewables, said.

Kunickis thinks that the market should find an alternative to the feed-in tariff. He suggests corporate power purchase agreements at market prices or auctions.

Monaco-based energy firm EuroCape hasn't received any money either after signing the memorandum with the state, according to its country manager Adrien

Fouchet.

"We've started the construction of a 500-megawatt project. Today this project cannot be finalized because of the current situation," Fouchet said. EuroCape decided to start with 100 megawatts and to build further when the situation stabilizes.

Magnus Johansen, vice president for Norwegian wind producer NBT in Ukraine, said that foreign investors are usually wary of entering new countries. And if there's turbulence, they may postpone launching their operations here.

Johansen thinks few foreigners will risk entering Ukraine amid the

green energy crisis.

"If things are smoother, the international component will probably grow larger than the local – at least in the wind sector, because wind requires more investment, sophisticated investors and longer time to develop," Johansen said.

Johansen said one big obstacle to the development of the renewable sector in Ukraine is the lack of affordable financing. Interest rates are much higher in Ukraine than in most of Europe, he said. The high green tariff helped offset the financing costs, he said.

Ukraine's potential

Ukraine has great potential in the renewables sector, including wind, solar energy and biofuel, but it should have a clear strategy on how to develop this market, the experts said.

"Smart approach is a combination," Vitrenko said. According to him, solar is a great source of energy if there are batteries to store this power. Solar power plants generate most of the power when it's sunny in summer, but not when it's winter. Hence, there should be storage to get the power from when it's cloudy.

"Solar energy plus storage is one of the important cornerstones of future development," Vitrenko said, adding that Ukraine's current approach is flawed and results in shortages of energy sources in winter.

"We have a deficit of energy because there is no solar; all thermal power plants worked at full capacity," Vitrenko said. To survive, Ukraine has to import energy from Belarus and Russia and use expensive and carbon-producing gas to generate power.

"We have to do these things differently," Vitrenko said.

At the same time, Inna Sovsun, a member of parliament on the energy committee with the 20-member Voice party, said that Ukraine has never had a clear strategy in the energy sector.

"Our general public policy was 'how to survive winter this year,'" Sovsun said. She thinks it won't be possible for Ukraine to become carbon neutral while the oligarchs' lobby remains so strong on behalf of their coal, oil and gas interests.

"It's politically hardly feasible to develop a strategy when so much is being pushed by fossil-fuel interests," Sovsun said. 🇺🇦

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Even under pressure, Kolomoisky wields a lot of power in Ukraine

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ty stake. He even helped sack the pro-reform government of Prime Minister Oleksiy Honcharuk, which tried to pry the oligarch's grip from Centrenergo.

But now, near the end of Zelensky's second year in office, Kolomoisky's standing looks worse than ever.

After a four-year hiatus under Donald J. Trump, the U.S. is once again deeply invested in seeing Ukraine's government battle corruption. Ukraine is expected to measure up.

In December, the U.S. Department of Justice filed a civil forfeiture complaint alleging that Kolomoisky acquired commercial real estate in Cleveland using funds misappropriated from PrivatBank as part of a multi-billion-dollar insider loan scheme.

On March 5, U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken called out Kolomoisky, accusing him of "involvement in significant corruption" and banning him and his family from entering the U.S.

"These sanctions showed that the Americans are dissatisfied that Kolomoisky has such strong influence," says Shevchuk of the Anti-Corruption Action Center.

U.S. President Joe Biden has yet to have a conversation with Zelensky, which some political analysts believe is a deliberate snub until the Ukrainian president shows he means business in fighting corruption.

Ukraine started with baby steps, still refusing to charge Kolomoisky with bank fraud.

On March 15, Prosecutor General Iryna Venedyktova charged PrivatBank's former CEO Oleksandr Dubilet and his deputy Volodymyr Yatsenko with embezzling \$315 million. Yatsenko was pulled from a plane chartered by Kolomoisky as he tried to flee Ukraine — apparently after being tipped off about the coming arrest.

Now, the National Anti-Corruption Bureau is investigating Kolomoisky and his business partner billionaire



Ihor Palytsa, oligarch Ihor Kolomoisky's business partner, talks during a convention of the For the Future party in Kyiv on Aug. 27, 2020. Palytsa leads the For the Future party linked to Kolomoisky.

Hennady Bogolyubov for alleged theft of \$150 million from PrivatBank, according to the Kyiv Post's sources in the bureau.

In total, Kolomoisky and Bogolyubov are alleged of stealing \$5.5 billion from PrivatBank before it was nationalized in 2016. PrivatBank is suing its former owners in the U.K, Ukraine, Cyprus and Israel to recover the money for taxpayers who had to bail out the now state-owned institution.

Zelensky applauded the U.S. sanctions, signaling he's ready to fight Kolomoisky.

"Regarding the U.S. sanctions against the former owners of PrivatBank, we support this decision, and we are working to return the money to Ukraine. To return justice to Ukraine," said Zelensky.

But the only step that really matters would be criminal bank fraud charges against Kolomoisky and legal

actions against his other businesses in a bid to recover the PrivatBank money.

"If Ukraine fails to prosecute Kolomoisky, Ukraine might lose U.S. political backing, says Shevchuk. "Obviously, the U.S. won't stop supporting Ukraine's territorial integrity, but we can lose support in certain negotiations, see a decrease in financial assistance."

Oligarch's milking cows

Kolomoisky's strong standing comes from his vast assets in energy, industry, and media, as well as his political influence.

He maintains influence over two state companies — Ukrnafta and Centrenergo.

The first indication that Zelensky is serious in protecting Ukraine's interest would be ripping the state-owned companies out of Kolomoisky's hands.

The case of Centrenergo, which covers 15% of Ukraine's energy production, is the best example of the oligarch's influence.

The State Property Fund owns 78.3% of the company. The same fund alleges that over Hr 100 billion (\$3.73 billion) have been embezzled from the company since 2004.

The scheme is simple: Oligarchs with political power handpick the companies from which Centrenergo buys coal and gas, setting inflated prices. Then, they influence the prices by which Centrenergo sells electricity.

Since Zelensky took power in May 2019, Centrenergo began buying expensive gas from United Energy, owned by Kolomoisky through shell companies. At the same time, United Energy was buying the gas cheaply from Ukrnafta.

Then, United Energy bought more than half of electricity produced by

Centrenergo in 2020 with a 25% discount.

As a result, both state companies suffered losses.

Ukrnafta, already struggling, accumulated a \$1 billion tax debt, which it settled in December in a three-way swap between Ukrnafta, its majority shareholder Naftogaz, and the government.

"The pricing in many instances wasn't fair," says Andriy Gerus, a lawmaker with Zelensky's 245-member Servant of the People faction and the head of the parliament's energy committee. "Centrenergo needs to be privatized as fast as possible."

In May 2020, after a year-long court battle with Kolomoisky, the State Property Fund installed industry veteran Oleksandr Korchinsky as Centrenergo's general director.

It didn't help. Kolomoisky continued to milk Centrenergo.

In February, the State Property Fund changed the company's leadership again.

Now, Kolomoisky's United Energy is suing Centrenergo for Hr 148 million (\$5.3 million). In turn, Centrenergo alleges that United Energy owes the company Hr 725 million (\$26 million) for electricity.

The State Property Fund didn't respond to Kyiv Post's request for comment by publication time.

In Ukrnafta, the situation is more straightforward. Kolomoisky's companies own 43% of Ukrnafta. The oligarch appoints 5 out of 11 board members. Since 2004, Ukrnafta has been appointing CEOs nominated by this minority — in other words, by Kolomoisky.

In 2020, Ukrnafta was supposed to get a fresh start. The company was to be cleared of all debt and receive a new independent director.

It didn't work.

After the search for the new CEO reached its final stage in May, Ukrnafta's supervisory board voted to terminate the competition and appoint the acting CEO of Ukrnafta, Oleg Gez, to the job.

Gez was supported by all five board members linked to Kolomoisky and, surprisingly, by one board member appointed by state-owned Naftogaz, which owns the majority stake in Ukrnafta.

Acting Energy Minister Yuriy Vitrenko said that the scandal forced his exit as a top executive of Naftogaz after he confronted Naftogaz CEO Andriy Kobolyev and said he could not work for the state energy company as long as Kolomoisky, a minority shareholder, controls Ukrnafta.

Ukrnafta denies selling gas below the market rate and says that the oligarch doesn't have a hold of the company.

Kolomoisky's monopolies

Besides milking state-owned companies, Kolomoisky owns the country's largest oil refinery in Kremenchuk and controls over 80% of Ukraine's ferroalloy production.

The oligarch also owns Ukraine's flagship carrier Ukraine's International Airlines (UIA), the

Energy

- Ukrnafta oil company (owns 43%)*
- Ukrnafta gas station chain
- Centrenergo energy company*
- Kremenchuk oil refinery
- Minority shares in Poltava, Chernihiv, Sumy regional energy companies
- Gas station chains — AVIAS, ANP, Sentosa Oil

Main parts of oligarch Ihor Kolomoisky's empire

(most of them Kolomoisky co-owns with his partners, mainly Hennadiy Bogolyubov)

Politics

- 30 lawmakers in the governing Servant of the People party
- 24-member For the Future parliament faction
- Mayors in regional capitals — Poltava, Cherkasy & Lutsk, through the For the Future party
- For the Future party controls the Volyn Oblast Council

Light Industry

- DniproAzot
- Biola beverage company
- Shedro food processing company
- Privat Agro

Aviation

- UIA
- Windrose

Media

TV Channels:

- 1+1
- 2+2
- UNIAN
- TET
- PLUSPLUS

Ihor Kolomoisky

Heavy Industry

- Nikopol ferroalloy plant
- Zaporizhia ferroalloy plant
- Marhanets mining and processing plant
- Pokrov mining and processing plant
- Kryvyi Rih iron ore plant
- Four Kryvbas coal mines

* companies officially owned by the state, yet kept under Kolomoisky's influence through friendly CEOs.

Not prosecuting Kolomoisky will doom Zelensky's de-oligarchization

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country's largest gas chains, Biola beverage company and a major chemical plant DniproAzot, the country's largest producer of ammonia, caustic soda and other chemicals.

Kremenchuk Oil Refinery, owned by Kolomoisky's Ukrtatnafta, is the only big oil refinery in the country. The company is Ukraine's largest producer of diesel, gasoline, jet fuel and bitumen, an integral element in construction and road repairs.

The oil refinery produces over 90% of Ukraine's diesel and gasoline. However, because of imports from Belarus and Russia, Kolomoisky's oil refinery accounts for only 50% of gasoline on the market and a mere 15% of diesel.

Kolomoisky's oil refinery has been lobbying the restriction on imports of petroleum products. Ukrtatnafta says that Belarus and Russian state-owned companies receive subsidies and thus create unfair competition on the Ukrainian market.

However, Kolomoisky still manag-

es to use the oil refinery to mingle with the market.

Buying cheap oil from Ukrnafta, through United Energy, the oil refinery sells cheap diesel and gasoline to Kolomoisky's gas station chains – Avias, ANP and Sentosa.

The three brands together have a total of over 1,000 gas stations, making them the largest chain. Furthermore, Kolomoisky has direct control of over 500 gas stations owned by Ukrnafta.

According to Serhiy Kuyun, the head of oil and gas consultancy A-95, thanks to the oil refinery, the gas chains sell high-quality gasoline at low prices.

"It's practically impossible to legally sell gasoline and diesel cheaper than at Kolomoisky's gas chains," says Kuyun.

However, Kolomoisky has recently lost a chunk of his gasoline empire.

In mid-January, the Supreme Court ruled in favor of PrivatBank, allowing the now state-owned company to seize 247 gas stations from Kolomoisky.



Kostyantyn Chernichkin

People line up in front of the PrivatBank branch in Kyiv on Jan 4, 2021. Investigators found that \$5.5 billion were allegedly stolen by the bank's former owners, billionaires Ihor Kolomoisky and Hennadiy Bogolyubov. The bank was nationalized in 2016.

During Kolomoisky's ownership of PrivatBank, the bank was giving out insider loans to the oligarch's companies, while their assets were used as a pledge. When the bank was nationalized, the bank began taking hold of assets pledged on the oligarch's behalf.

Assets of DniproAzot and Biola beverage company were frozen awaiting the court's rulings, while the oligarch's Bukovel ski resort was transferred to PrivatBank.

Political influence

Kolomoisky's billion-dollar empire is built around companies he doesn't own, while the companies that he actually owns are reliant on favor-

able legislation.

That's why Kolomoisky's key asset is his 1+1 Media Group, which owns three out of the 10 most-watched TV channels in Ukraine: 1+1, 2+2, and TET.

Kolomoisky's channel's news segments and talk shows promote the owner's agenda and give airtime to politicians favored by him.

In 2019, Kolomoisky's TV was actively supporting Zelensky. The two are still connected through 1+1: The comedy shows produced by Zelensky's company still run on Kolomoisky's TV channel.

Although the oligarch never admitted it, media reports and investigations found evidence of Kolomoisky

influencing at least 30 lawmakers from Zelensky's Servant of the People faction.

That's not all: Kolomoisky is the main backer of the 24-member For the Future group, led by lawmaker Ihor Palytsa, Kolomoisky's associate.

That means Kolomoisky influences some 50 out of 423 members of parliament.

Without the support of those 50 lawmakers, Zelensky's fractured party can't pass almost any legislation.

Now, says Shevchuk, the ball is in Zelensky's court.

"The question is will it all end with the president's public address (against Kolomoisky) or will there be real actions," says Shevchuk.

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'The worst thing a doctor sees is eyes of patients he lost'

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The government calls it the third wave, and scientists predict it to be the deadliest yet.

The Kolomyia hospital is at the front line of this crisis.

Strong thirst for life

In another intensive care ward, there are two 46-year-old men. Despite their relatively young age, they are among the most critical patients in the hospital. They're also the most determined to survive.

"Patients with a strong thirst for life. This is what we call those who do not give up, who are strong-spirited and follow our recommendations, often forcing themselves to do so," says anesthesiologist Vitaliy Yakubiyak.

"Taras and Vasyi are vivid examples of the fact that not everything depends on the nurse, the doctor, the medicine. The patient also contributes to their treatment process. The patient must work for it."

Vasyi has been in intensive care for three months. He has worn an oxygen mask for so long that his nose has started to rot. To save his face, the doctors had to switch him to an oxygen helmet.

"Here is a hole — he eats through it; he drinks through it. If you take the valve off, the helmet becomes soft. It is airtight, see," Yakubiyak shows how the helmet works.

With the valve open, Vasyi starts coughing. He looks at the doctor, terrified.

"Do not be afraid," Yakubiyak says and closes the valve. "Do not be afraid."

Vasyi is fully dependent on the beeping machine next to his bed that provides him with air. Without it, he would survive for only a few minutes. While his spirit is strong, the disease and the long hospital



A COVID-19 patient undergoes a photofluorography screening to diagnose possible lung damage in Kolomyia District Hospital in Ivano-Frankivsk Oblast on March 16, 2021.

stay weakened his body. Doctors help him stand up and sit back down to get some exercise.

"He still lacks muscle strength. But we will overcome it. Right, Vasyi?" the doctor asks.

"We will," Vasyi says.

"We will exercise and get him home by Easter," Yakubiyak says, meaning early May.

Vasyi's neighbor, businessman Taras Biyovsky, is breathing through an oxygen mask. He regrets he did not take the coronavirus seriously enough.

"You do not understand it until you wake up in the middle of the night and feel a catastrophic lack of oxygen, you want to breathe and you can't," Biyovsky sighs.

"At that moment, you realize how serious this disease is, how you're balancing between life and maybe something else we do not fully understand yet. This is a warning to everyone else not to neglect their safety," says the father of five. A mug labeled "Best Dad" sits on his bedside table.

Many people here used to

think like Biyovsky did before he contracted the virus, ignoring quarantine restrictions, doctors say. Boyko says that the outbreak wouldn't be so bad if Ukrainians didn't have such a strong urge to go to resorts and celebrate.

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Deadly virus has patients fighting for every breath to stay alive

page 16 →

“And when they say: ‘I am going on holiday because I am healthy.’ You only think you are healthy. There is a saying among doctors: ‘There are no healthy people, only poorly examined ones,’” he says.

Struggling hospitals

Ivano-Frankivsk Oblast, where the hospital is located, became a “red zone” on Feb. 26. A special commission recognized that the COVID-19 situation in the region was critical and raised quarantine measures to their highest level. Officials set up checkpoints to restrict access to the



Volodymyr Petrov

A mother who volunteers at Kolomyia District Hospital in Ivano-Frankivsk Oblast takes care of her daughter, a patient in the coronavirus ward on March 16, 2021.

area, canceled public transport and closed shopping malls, restaurants

and markets.

But by then, local hospitals were overflowing with patients. In late February, Kolomyia District Hospital, which has a capacity of 175 beds for coronavirus patients, had to use additional beds to fit 191 people.

Supplies are badly needed. Before COVID-19, five tons of oxygen could last the hospital a year. Now it goes through two-three tons every day.

Things are a little better now. The Kolomyia hospital’s coronavirus unit is back down to 170 patients. This is not because the outbreak is letting up but because three nearby hospitals started admitting patients with COVID-19.

One of them is Bohorodchanska hospital. It is tiny, able to fit only 30 patients with coronavirus. In late February, a 120-bed mobile hospital was set next to it.

But even after mass infections began, not everyone followed quarantine restrictions. The local market is open despite the ban. Some shops pretend to be closed but still let in customers.

“Many people did not believe in the coronavirus here. But now so many have contracted it, some start-

ed speaking up about it,” says Liubov Rymaruk, a resident of Kolomyia. “People used to hide it from everyone because they were afraid of what the neighbors would say.”

Ukraine’s third wave of coronavirus is gaining momentum. Four oblasts have been designated “red” zones including Ivano-Frankivsk, Uzhhorod and Chernivtsi in western Ukraine and Zhytomyr in northern Ukraine. Most of the rest are “orange” and aren’t far from tipping into the red.

“The outbreak in Ukraine started here,” Klapko says, referring to the March surge of infection hitting western Ukraine. “And this is what will happen next — it will spread throughout central, eastern, and southern Ukraine, I’m afraid.”

“Colleagues in the rest of the country must expect it and be prepared,” he adds.

‘The war is here’

Even though the war with Kremlin-financed separatists is in the Donbas, 1,200 kilometers away from Ivano-Frankivsk Oblast, doctors here feel

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Volodymyr Petrov



COVID-19 patient Vasyl wears a helmet supplying him with oxygen-enriched air at Kolomyia District Hospital in Ivano-Frankivsk Oblast on March 16, 2021.

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'The war is here' — volunteers join doctors to fight pandemic

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like they are on the front line too.

"Trust me, the war is here. Ukraine is fighting on two fronts now. One is with a visible enemy, which attacks in the east, and the other is a fight with an enemy that attacks from everywhere," says Boyko, who served as volunteer military doctor in Donbas.

"This enemy is way more dangerous and insidious," he says, "It is unpredictable and every medical worker is a fighter."

The medical staff is worn out, often working without days off, doctors and nurses tell the Kyiv Post. They don't complain. Overworking is something one can get used to, they say. The most difficult challenge is treating a colleague or relative.

Up to five medical workers are treated for coronavirus here at any one time. Two doctors are being treated in the unit at the moment.

Boyko walks over to check on his colleague Tetiana. Her condition has recently deteriorated.

"She is a general practitioner but the disease does not pick people on the basis of how much they know about it," Boyko says, "The virus attacks everyone."

"This doctor spent over 30 years of her life working for our institution.

Now she works in a private clinic. She is an excellent professional," Boyko says of his colleague. Almost the entire medical team of his has already had COVID-19, including Boyko.

Svitlana Burchenko, a nurse, says the most difficult thing for her is to treat a relative.

"You are worried about your patients, but when your family members get to the hospital you worry even more," she says. Burchenko's uncle and child were treated for coronavirus in this hospital.

"I hear this every day from my colleagues: 'It is difficult for us, it is psychologically difficult,'" Boyko says.

There are 96 medical workers for the 175 COVID patients in the hospital. The administration says that's not enough. Volunteers come to help out the doctors.

A priest began the volunteer movement in the Kolomyia hospital in August 2020.

"He was our first volunteer and we were pleasantly surprised when the priest came to take care of his parishioners," Boyko says, "He took care of nearly ten patients. Some probably became his parishioners after they recovered."

Being a volunteer is hard work, Boyko says. It requires taking care of not only your relative, but other



Volodymyr Petrov

Medical workers transport the body of a patient who died of COVID-19 complications in the intensive care unit at Kolomyia District Hospital in Ivano-Frankivsk oblast on March 16, 2021.

patients, too.

"They wash the bedridden patients, they change the bedsheets, they change the portable toilets," he says.

Vasyl Fedyuk is one of the volunteers. A veteran soldier and ambulance paramedic, he has been volunteering in the hospital for a month, taking care of his mother and father-in-law among other patients.

For Fedyuk, the front line is also here and it's a harder battle than conventional war.

"I fought there. There were shooting, deaths, but you knew your family was safe. And psychologically it was easier," he says, "And here you try to protect your relatives and you see that sometimes you cannot."

Fedyuk's father-in-law died in this hospital two days ago.

and nurses have already been vaccinated against COVID-19. The vaccine arrived in the city on March 11.

However, Ukraine has only started its vaccination drive in late February and has just 500,000 doses, not nearly enough to cover even the highest priority group — medical workers and troops.

Meanwhile, new patients keep arriving. Kateryna Shepetyuk, a 71-year-old history teacher is waiting to be admitted at the reception desk.

"Computed tomography showed 50% lung damage and I was told that it is better to get hospitalized," Shepetyuk says. "I hope everything will be okay, that they will help. They help many people. I hope they will help me too."

While Shepetyuk is being admitted, a couple of pensioners are discharged.

"They cured everything perfectly. Well done," a man says.

"I am so happy when people recover and go home like this man and this woman," nurse Burchenko says. "I look at their faces and am so pleased that they go home."

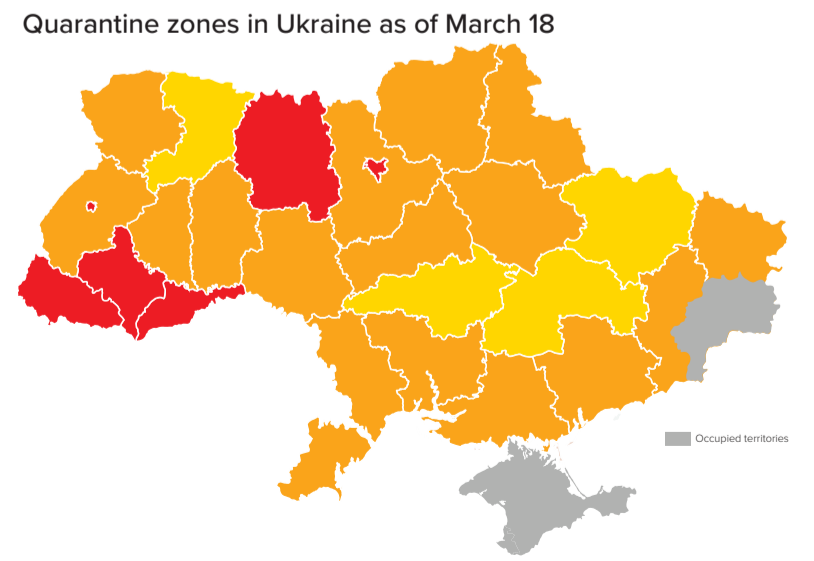
Shot of hope

Hope is the fuel that keeps the hospital and its workers running.

"The light at the end of the tunnel — this is the only motivation I have so far, unfortunately," says Klapko, "(I hope) that at some point it will get easier and this COVID-19 will go away."

Vaccines could bring the world closer to this goal.

Klapko, Boyko, and other doctors



TOP 10 KYIV POST exclusives online this week

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Kyiv adopts new lockdown to stop coronavirus surge

By Olga Rudenko
rudenko@kyivpost.com

Kyiv will introduce a three-week lockdown starting Saturday, March 20. It will run through April 9.

The city authorities introduced the lockdown in response to the rising number of COVID-19 infections and hospitalizations, Mayor Vitali Klitschko said at a briefing on March 18.

There are currently 230,633 active cases of COVID-19 in Ukraine; 15,053 new cases were registered as of March 18, 1,092 of them in Kyiv.

This is the third time Kyiv will go into lockdown. There were two nationwide lockdowns in Ukraine: In March-May 2020, and in January 2021.

These restrictions are introduced in Kyiv:

- theaters, movie theaters, museums, concert halls shut down;
- restaurants do only take-out and delivery;
- shopping malls shut down except for pharmacies, grocery stores and pet stores;
- beauty salons and gyms work by appointment; no group fitness classes allowed;
- religious services are only allowed in spaces with at least 10 square meters per person;
- no mass entertainment events are allowed; sports events will take place without an audience;
- public transport will work but only 50% of seats can be filled;
- schools go back to remote learning; kindergartens remain open;
- all public offices and state-owned organizations that aren't critical



Volodymyr Petrov

A drone picture shows an aerial view of Khreshchatyk Street in downtown Kyiv on March 9, 2021. With coronavirus infections on the rise, Kyiv is imposing a lockdown from March 20 through April 9. The most noticeable restrictions will be shutdowns of restaurants, shopping malls, theaters, museums and concert halls. Groceries, pharmacies and pet stores will operate. Public transportation can work at 50% capacity. Kindergartens remain open. Private companies are urged to switch to remote work as much as possible.

infrastructure switch to remote work; private companies are recommended to switch to remote work as much as possible. Kyiv joins several other regions that are currently under lockdown.

Most of them are in western Ukraine. Lviv introduced a lockdown a day before Kyiv did.

In early March, the government said Ukraine has entered the third wave of the COVID-19 pandemic. The prime minister didn't rule out

the possibility of another nationwide lockdown.

The National Academy of Science believes that the third wave will be the deadliest yet, expecting 40,000 infections and 1,000 deaths each day. This wave

is likely to last until mid-May, with the biggest spike in April, scientists believe.

At the same time, Health Minister Maksym Stepanov said on March 18 that the situation doesn't call for a nationwide lockdown yet. 🇺🇦

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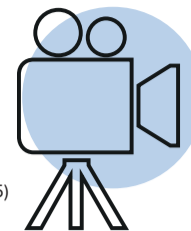
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lenki lenki hit puffers start winter fashion revolution

Courtesy of lenki lenki



Ukrainian outerwear brand lenki lenki is praised worldwide for its hourglass-shaped high-quality oversized puffers that combine comfort and style. The label's recent autumn-winter collection features puffers that resemble shearing coats worn by the Evenki people and other models including its bestseller Michelin Jacket.

By Daria Shulzhenko
shulzhenko@kyivpost.com

The lenki lenki outerwear brand needed no marketing to sell out its first 300 items in less than a month.

Its founder Dmitriy Ivenko simply offered something that hasn't had an alternative – hourglass-shaped, high-quality puffer jackets that solve the challenge of staying warm while looking stylish in winter.

"It wasn't appropriate to wear some sporty outerwear to formal meetings or theaters, so people usually wore coats," Ivenko told the Kyiv Post. "We started the shift."

In less than a year since founding, lenki lenki was recognized as Ukraine's breakthrough of 2017 by the local Best Fashion Awards.

International acclaim soon followed with top style icons sporting the brand's revolutionary garments, which only further boosted its popularity. In the U.S., Hailey Bieber, Emily Ratajkowski, and sisters Bella and Gigi Hadid are only some of the fans of the signature puffers made in Ukraine.

Now lenki lenki enjoys the status of a global label praised by Western fashion media and sold in 110 stores in 23 countries.

Trendsetters

Ivenko was no newbie to the world of fashion by the time he established the brand.

A graduate of Kyiv National University of Technology and Design, he has spent about 10 years working for Helen Marlen Group's luxury stores in Kyiv, having grown from a buyer to marketing director.

He left the company in 2013 to thrive as a managing partner at Asthik Group, one of Ukraine's fastest-growing luxury retailers that represent world-known brands like Valentino and Agent Provocateur.

By 2016, Ivenko explored the fashion industry inside out. The more he worked with the international scene's key players, the stronger his desire became to create his own product.

Although it seemed impossible to offer something new to the saturated market full of apparel for any taste, Ivenko found an empty niche of "functional yet stylish" outerwear that would fit both a high-end function and a city street stroll.

Ivenko named the label after his ancestors, the Evenki, a widely scattered ethnic group of northern Siberia, whose aesthetic serves as part of the inspiration for the lenki lenki brand.

The label initially crafted four

types of oversized puffers for women coming in various colors. One of them, the Michelin Jacket, was inspired by the Michelin Man, the famous mascot of the French tire company. Topped up with a waist belt to form an elegant silhouette, the model is still the label's best-selling signature piece.

Acclaimed Ukrainian designer Sasha Kanevski, who is currently working as a senior designer at Yeezy, the footwear empire by the U.S. star rapper Kanye West, was on the team behind lenki lenki's first collection. The brand still works together with designers from Kanevski's studio.

To present the first drop, Ivenko simply posted the photographs of models wearing his puffers on Instagram. Though he didn't pay for any promotion, to his surprise, dozens of messages from influencers and fashionistas seeking collaborations hit the brand's direct messages.

"The result exceeded my expectations greatly. It was an absolute hit from the first collection," Ivenko says.

In the years to come, Ivenko invested in promotion, but the initial success, he says, came from the high demand.

"It was the birth of a new trend," Ivenko says.

What started as a monobrand

with a 12-member team now crafts apparel and accessories for women, men and children. Its staff of 120 employees works at two productions in Kyiv and Cherkasy, a city of 280,000 people 200 kilometers southeast from the Ukrainian capital.

But what makes lenki lenki a truly special brand is not the scale of production, but its passion for innovation.

Technological fashion

Each of the lenki lenki puffers is thought through in detail. The brand uses only top-notch materials such as the fabric from Swiss company Schoeller that has windproof and water-repellent abilities, zippers from another Swiss company Riri and the finest Ukrainian goose down that makes puffers light yet warm.

The high-quality components explain the jacket prices that average at \$1,300.

Ivenko, who is also the creative director of the brand, says the team does a lot of research in fashion, looking into archives and visiting flea markets.

They also study both the heritage of Ukraine and the Evenki to further incorporate it into the modern context. Its latest autumn-winter 2020–

City Life

With Asami Terajima
asamin.2000@gmail.com

Where to buy contemporary art pieces by Ukrainians

Living in a country struck by war and pandemic, Ukrainian artists have unleashed their creative sides during times of adversity.

But the local art arena has been flourishing long before COVID-19 took its toll on humanity.

As Ukraine tries to transform into a democratic European state while defending its borders from Russian aggression, public discussions of national identity, values and human rights, have sparked artistic minds. Small avant-garde galleries have popped up all around Kyiv to showcase the pieces.

The works of Ukrainian artists are also exhibited in the world's top galleries like the New York Museum of Modern Art and the Victoria and Albert Museum in London.

French artist and designer Isagus Toche, who has lived in Ukraine for four years, says that Ukraine's freedom of artistic expression allows local artists to create bold pieces that steer the conversation in the right direction.

One example is Dariya Marchenko's "The Face of Corruption," a critical portrait of ex-President Petro Poroshenko made of candy wrappers from a confectionary firm that he owns.

"(There is) an amazing freedom of creation, and a very young spirit," Toche told the Kyiv Post.

Though the pandemic forced galleries and festivals to go online, making it harder for buyers to assess art quality, Toche says that there is a silver lining, as it became easier to discover talents from anywhere in the world.

Still, people have become more reluctant to spend money, especially on low-priority items, hurting art sales, according to Kate Taylor, the founder of cultural management agency Port. During the first three months under the 2020 lockdown, the international art auction sales dropped by 80%, Taylor says. But then people adapted quickly, and almost all works were bought online towards the end of the year.

"Buying a picture with just a click is even nicer," Taylor told the Kyiv Post. "What is the point of flying to London for an auction if you just have to click 'bid' on time, and the picture is yours."

Aside from supporting the local artists during the crisis, buying art is a way to brush up a home and invest in something timeless.

From Hadid sisters to Emilia Clarke, global celebrities wear Ukrainian-made lenki lenki

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2021 collection features modern puffers that resemble shearling coats worn by the Evenki people to stay warm in the harsh northern climate.

While Lenki Lenki is known for experimenting with color palettes, prints and silhouettes, the brand often goes beyond its regular production. Its Ski Collection was one such case.

Ivenko says he has seen many people wearing Lenki Lenki jackets from regular collections at ski resorts, which inspired him to design gear for winter sports. Pushing its own boundaries with the Ski Collection, the brand also found an opportunity to experiment with new modern technologies.

The pieces from the collection use waterproof zippers and innovative three-layered Gore-Tex fabric, which protects from snow, rain and wind. They are also equipped with the Recco detectors, which help locate a lost person in case of an avalanche or another type of emergency.

Another innovation Lenki Lenki tried out was ultrasonic welding technology to make garments with no threads or stitches.

The brand's Vegan Collection is yet another experiment. The entire collection of trendy puffers was made from innovative econyl material made of recycled fishing nets, while the goose down was replaced with an eco-filler made from recycled ocean

Veronika Strashko



Dmitriy Ivenko, the founder and creative director of Ukraine's most celebrated winter outerwear brand lenki lenki, poses for a photograph during the interview with the Kyiv Post at the brand's office in Kyiv on March 17, 2021.

plastic.

Lenki Lenki plans to continue breaking new ground. Ivenko says the label will soon launch a home wear collection. Although he couldn't provide details, the collection will be "something that hasn't existed before," he says.

Star puffer

It's hard to find a Ukrainian brand that appears in the wardrobes of

Western celebrities more than Lenki Lenki.

Once the cold season starts, Ukrainian media get flooded with news of stars spotted in the famous puffers.

The outings of some of the celebrities in Lenki Lenki come as no big surprise to the label, as it sends its pieces to their stylists for free. If they like them, the stars promote garments online and offline by sim-

ply wearing them. The practice has become a popular marketing tool in fashion with the growth of influencer culture on Instagram.

This was the case with Canadian singer Grimes, who recently posted photographs of her wearing a jacket and a scarf by Lenki Lenki, which they had earlier shipped to her team.

One of the label's biggest ambassadors, U.S. model and actress Ratajkowski, started wearing its puff-

ers long before it sent some to her stylist, Ivenko says. The star of the U.S. romantic comedy "Cruise," Ratajkowski, has at least four Lenki Lenki jackets of various models and colors.

"She keeps wearing Lenki Lenki jackets, and we can see how much she likes them," Ivenko says.

One of the recent admirers of the brand was a mystery to the brand until her public appearance. The online order from London for a name similar to the one of U.K. actress Emilia Clarke hinted it was for her, but the team couldn't be sure.

"We kept thinking whether it was her or not," Ivenko says.

About two months later, in March, the star of hit TV series "The Game of Thrones," Clarke, was spotted wearing a beige Shearling Lizzy Jacket, joining Lenki Lenki's growing fandom.

For his groundbreaking designs, Ivenko was listed among the world's most influential people in fashion by The Business of Fashion outlet three years in a row, in 2017–2019. But he says that seeing people wearing and appreciating Lenki Lenki, whether they are celebrities or not, is "the best praise for him."

"Fashion develops together with society, and I'm thrilled that more technically sophisticated garments are becoming normal in everyday life," Ivenko says.

"I can proudly say that we are among the founders of this global trend." 🇺🇦

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City Life

Supporting local artists is now as timely as ever

page 20 →

Here are six online and offline platforms to purchase contemporary works by Ukrainian artists.

The Naked Room

The Naked Room gallery emerged on Reitarska Street to make the art world more accessible for the new generation of art enthusiasts in Kyiv.

Once a tailor's shop, it is now an exhibition space where art pieces decorate the "naked" walls. Visitors can also enjoy coffee, wine and cake in a small coffee shop inside.

"We are on one hand a really high-level, professional art market, on the other hand also a casual place to meet each other and eat and drink," Marc Wilkins, Swiss film director and the co-founder, told the Kyiv Post.

A core value of the gallery is building long-lasting friendships with the artists that it represents, according to Wilkins. That's why there are two types of exhibitions at The Naked Room: month-long displays of artists the gallery has collaborated with for at least two years and shorter "experimental" displays by guest artists. Art bought during an exhibition can be claimed by its new owners after it's over.

The current exhibition features a series of paintings with elements of embroidery by Olesia Trofymenko. Also a filmmaker, she uses the techniques that give her paintings a striking cinematographic character. One of the central pieces is "WTF," a gloomy oil painting of a woman taking off her face mask, priced at

Kupava Auction House



Sculptures and paintings by contemporary artists displayed in the pre-auction exhibition at the Kupova Auction House biannual event on Nov. 7, 2019. Kupava is one of a few online and offline platforms that sell contemporary art by Ukrainians.

1,800 euros (Hr 59,000).

Artworks that are not currently displayed at The Naked Room are presented in its online catalog. But the gallery can also show them in person. The collection offers photographs, paintings, sculptures and more by 30 artists priced at 350–5,000 euros (Hr 11,500–165,000) each.

The Naked Room. 21 Reitarska St. www.thenakedroom-catalogue.com. +380500145282.

Kupava Auction House

Kupava Auction House is a biannual event that showcases rare works mostly by Ukrainian artists, some dating back to the 1930s.

Auction items including paintings and sculptures are selected by the organizer Ludmila Bereznitska, who is also an art critic and co-founder of Bereznitsky Art Foundation.

"Auction is the instrument for formulation and support of the art market in Ukraine," Bereznitska told

the Kyiv Post.

After a long pause amid the pandemic, the upcoming auction will be held on April 24, presenting around 50 artworks worth \$500–\$50,000 (Hr 13,800–1.4 million). The pre-auction viewings will be open to the public from April 10 for two weeks.

Items chosen for the auction include the works by Ukrainian geniuses like Sergei Grigoriev, Mykola Hlushchenko and Evgenii Vsevolodovich, alongside pieces by present-day artists like Illya Chichkan, Oleksandr Rojtburd, Arsen Savadov and Maksim Maksimov.

Paintings available for purchase from Bereznitska's personal collection and unsold items from the previous auctions are available for bidding on the gallery's website.

Bereznitsky Art Foundation. 22 Kozhumiatska St. Pre-auction exhibition will be open on April 10–24. Tue–Sat. 11 a.m. – 7 p.m. Registration form for the April 24 auction will be available next month at www.kupavaauctionhouse.com.

Spilne Art

Spilne Art doesn't have a permanent physical gallery, as it lacks the mobility of a digital platform and may not be suitable for all artists.

Launched in 2020 by founder Nataliia Tkachenko, the online gallery offers selected artworks not only based on artistic techniques like brush strokes, but also on their message and the impact they may bring. "You will find a lot of Ukrainian talents whose works deserve to be seen and bought," the platform's art director Anastasia Yovanovskaya told the Kyiv Post.

There is a wide range of pieces at Spilne Art, but many are paintings of everyday items like a cup transformed into whimsical illustrations.

Natasha Steshenko's "Open Season," a brightly colored oil paint-

ing illustrating a common scene at picnics in Ukraine, is one of the pieces available for Hr 32,100 (around \$1,160). Skewered meat known as shashlik sits on top of a plastic bag from a local Ukrainian grocery store, bringing instant summer nostalgia.

Spilne Art. www.spilne.art.

Sil-Sol

Ukrainian art dealer Evgen Karas's work moved into a Facebook marketplace that he created in April 2020 with Russian colleague Marat Guelman to support Ukrainian artists during the toughest lockdown period.

Sil-Sol ("Sil" means salt in Ukrainian and "Sol" means salt in Russian) grew into something Ukraine has never seen before, an online platform for fine art with discussions, lectures and accessible prices.

Once artists are approved by Karas online, they can directly connect with buyers through a Facebook group. For every purchase, there is a 10% moderation fee.

All sorts of art forms like photography, drawings and sculptures are available on Sil-Sol. One of the recent additions, Sergey Polyakov's "Our Metropolis" is a soft-colored realistic oil painting capturing a wide panoramic view of Kyiv's busy city center, priced at Hr 8,300 (around \$300).

Sil-Sol. www.facebook.com/groups/saltandpepper.art.

Port.agency

"Art should be accessible to everyone" is the philosophy of Port.agency, a cultural management agency and a web-based store selling paintings, drawings and sculptures. Taylor, the platform's founder, is on a mission to "destroy the myth" that art is an object of luxury only affordable by the rich.

The website offers a wide range of prices, from \$30 to \$1,500, with plenty of budget-friendly options.

Ksenia Hnylytska's "Bogdan Khmelnytsky street" is among the presented pieces for \$400 (Hr 11,000). The watercolor painting draws the historical buildings that "are falling into decay" and are likely to be replaced by another shopping or business center.

Other works at the store include nude arts, etchings that exemplify buildings and sculptures of animal faces.

Port.agency. www.port.agency.

Artelect

An online store for paintings, drawings and photography launched in 2016, Artelect also offers gift cards from Hr 500 (around \$18), a convenient present for art fans.

Elena Glory's "View," an acrylic painting depicting small patterned circles in blue and gold interwoven together, is one of the pieces for sale, priced at Hr 12,000 (around \$430). Many works at Artelect use rich colors to picture sceneries or objects, while some are abstract scenes of light patterns or the planet.

Artelect. www.artelect.com.ua.



Volodymyr Petrov

Celebrating the end of winter

People watch as a scarecrow is burning down which symbolizes winter during the Butter Week celebration at the Pyrohiv Museum of Folk Architecture and Life in Kyiv on March 13, 2021. Hundreds of Kyivans came to Pyrohiv outdoor folk museum to participate in the celebrations of Butter Week. Butter Week, known in Ukraine as Maslyana, is a week-long traditional holiday that marks the end of the winter. Celebrations include eating bliny, thin Ukrainian pancakes, and burning down a scarecrow that symbolizes winter. Also, there are festive concerts of the national ensembles and museum workers who organized games for children and adults. Temperatures have obligated, with the highs staying on the plus side, but in single digits, this week.

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In October 2019, Alinea International launched a new five-year project in Ukraine: **Support Ukraine's Reforms for Governance (SURGe)**. SURGe is a technical assistance project in Ukraine, funded by Global Affairs Canada and implemented by Alinea International Ltd.

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- *Expert in programs and training courses development.*
- *Senior Data Analyst.*

Deadline for applications: **March 26, 2021.**

Deadline for applications: **March 29, 2021.**

Please, send your applications to: valerias@alineainternational.com.

For more detailed information about preferred qualifications and skills, indicative duties and responsibilities, as well as applying procedure, please visit web-site: <https://edge.in.ua/vacancies/>

CLASSIFIEDS

Dima Svichinsky, a 3-month-old baby, suffers from life-threatening spinal muscular atrophy type 1 (SMA-1).

The innovative Zolgensma, created by the pharmaceutical company Novartis, is the only treatment that will give Dima the opportunity to breathe and move freely. The cost is \$2.3 million. At the moment, the family has raised \$350,000, about 15% of the amount needed. Any help from you will give the family a chance for hope, and will give life to baby Dima!

Contact: **Victoria Sybir** in Odesa
telephone: **+38 (063) 805-6342**
email: vika.sybir@gmail.com



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