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**The New York Times**

## **Mongolia Bans Grain Exports as Hottest Temperatures in 56 Years Cause Drought**

First posted on <https://www.nytimes.com/reuters/2017/07/28/world/asia/28reuters-mongolia-drought.html>

ULAANBAATAR — Mongolia has suspended grain exports with as much as a third of its farmland suffering from severe drought after temperatures last month rose to the highest in more than half a century, agricultural officials said.

The Ministry of Agriculture and Industry has banned grain exports as it prepares for a shortfall in the autumn harvest. Temperatures in Mongolia reached their highest level in 56 years in June, according to weather reports, threatening crop production.

"This summer is really dry," said Odbayar, a spokesman with the Information and Research Institute of Meteorology, Hydrology and Environment on Friday. "Central and eastern Mongolia are most affected."

Authorities are also dealing with wildfires in Mongolia's fragile steppe and desert environment. Earlier this month, thick acrid clouds blanketed the capital Ulaanbaatar as winds blew smoke from the wildfires blazing in the north.

Officials are concerned the droughts will lead to crop failures that will leave the country's semi-nomadic herders with insufficient fodder to help sustain their animals through the country's notoriously long and cold winter.

Mongolia frequently experiences conditions known as the "dzud", where freezing

temperatures and heavy snowfall results in the deaths of hundreds of thousands of livestock.

The country has made the expansion of its agriculture sector a major priority to shield its economy from swings in resource commodities prices.

The IMF agreed to a \$5.5 billion bailout with Mongolia earlier this year after a decline in copper and coal prices and falling demand from China sparked concerns that Mongolia would miss debt payment deadlines.

According to the United Nations Environment Programme, temperatures in Mongolia have risen by 2 degrees Celsius in the last 70 years, three times faster than the global average.

Rising desertification rates, melting glaciers and drying rivers and lakes threaten the livelihoods of Mongolia's herders, who account for nearly a third of the population.

(Reporting by Terrence Edwards; Editing by Christian Schmollinger)