

## No shortage in Foods and Basic Supplies, Minister of Agriculture Says



► "I declare with full responsibility that there is no shortage of supplies," said Otar Shamugia, Georgian Minister of Environment Protection and Agriculture.

BY KHATIA BZHALAVA

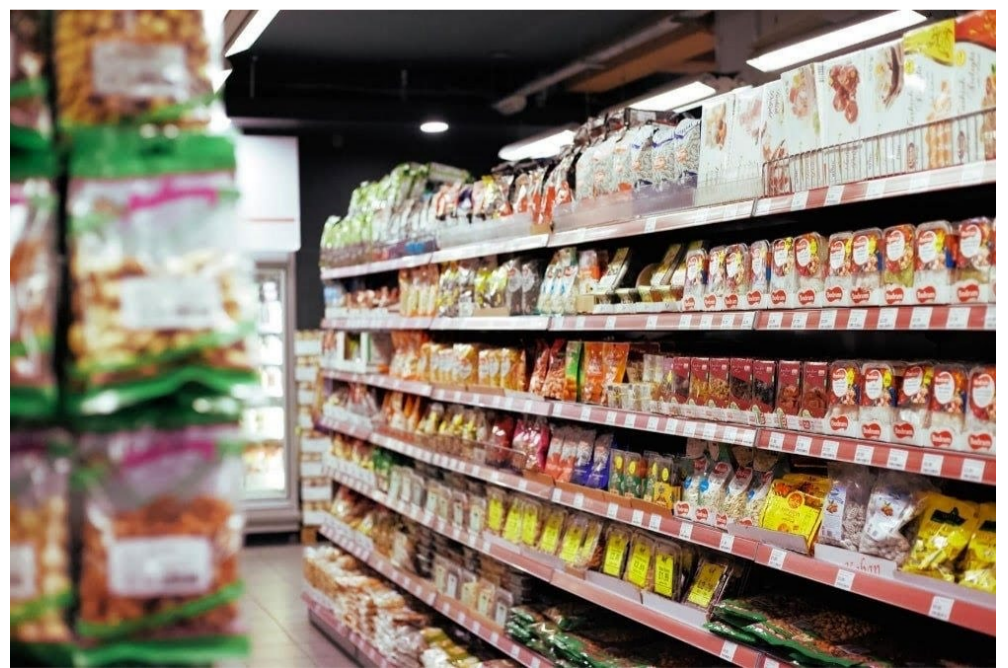
Georgian Minister of Environment Protection and Agriculture, Otar Shamugia announced after meeting the representatives of large trade chains and companies importing food and primary consumer products in Georgia that no shortage in stocks of supplies is observed in the country. According to the ministry, it is important that in parallel with maintaining a stable supply of products in the consumer market, companies act with social responsibility to avoid unreasonable rises in prices. The Minister said the sides involved in the meeting had agreed to work "in maximum coordination with importers and suppliers."

Reuters reported on Wednesday that Ukraine had banned exports of rye, barley, buckwheat, millet, sugar, salt, and meat until the end of 2022 per a cabinet resolution. According to Iva Chkhonia, the Head of the Georgian Distributors Association,

at this stage, the market situation is stable in Georgia, but in recent days, there have been delays in the supply of trade network due to 'excessive purchases' by the population which, according to him, artificially leads to shortages.

He stressed that the market in the country is in stable condition, urging the citizens "not to harm either yourself or other customers with excess purchases." As he explained, failures related to certain brands are caused by the breakdown of the logistics chain, however "if today a certain brand of oil, buckwheat or sugar is not on the counter, it does not mean that it will not be available in two or three days".

According to the Ministry, relevant services are constantly monitoring the uninterrupted supply and replenishment of food in the country, as well as coordinated work with representatives of major retail chains and companies importing food and primary consumer products in Georgia.



► Ukraine has suspended exports of rye, barley, buckwheat, millet, sugar, and salt due to the risk of food shortages in the country.

EXCHANGE RATES: US DOLLAR - 3.4019 | EURO - 3.7360 | GBP - 4.4806 | 100 RUSSIAN RUBLE - 2.4396 | SWISS FRANC - 3.6670 |

# Georgian Airways Removes Russian Mir Payment System

By NATALIA KOCHIASHVILI

The Russian Mir payment system was removed as a payment method on the website of the major Georgian airline "Georgian Airways" amid harsh criticism.

Since both Mastercard and VISA have left the Russian market after Moscow's invasion of Ukraine, MIR, a banking system created in Russia and for the Russian market, which operates in several countries outside the country, remains the last option (still highly limited one) for Russian citizens owning Russian-issued cards to conduct online transactions and transfer money abroad. Amid Russian invasion of Ukraine and subsequent unprecedented worldwide sanctions against Moscow, adding the payment system on the website stirred ire in the Georgian public.

In an interview to Radio Liberty's Georgian service on March 8, the head of Georgian Airway Tamaz Gaiashvili said that the main priority for him is to sell tickets:

"If anything can get the ticket sold, all systems will work. I do not join the sanctions and I have



no obligation [to join]. I am not a state, I am a private company. I am interested in selling a ticket, I don't care at all how it will be sold," said the company's director, adding that if booked, he would not refuse to conduct direct flights to Russia.

Gaiashvili added that the Russian "Mir" payment system was not added by the company itself, but by the banks Georgian Airways is cooperating with.

On March 9, the National Bank of Georgia released a statement saying that commercial banks and card processing systems operating in Georgia do not cooperate with the Russian "Mir" payment system, operations with "Mir" are fully carried out in the Russian system and it has no con-

tact with the Georgian financial system. Bank argued however, that it could not pass a judgment on a private company's decision to cooperate with Mir. NBG further noted that MIR company operated in occupied Abkhazia, possibly violating Georgian law on the Russian-occupied territories.

Then Gaiashvili suggested another explanation, saying that Georgian Airways couldn't add this payment system, there is a ticket sales company NetSky with which they have a contract and even if Georgian Airways wanted to sell these tickets, they wouldn't have been able to, since they do not have the opportunity to do so through Georgian banks.

One of the company officials

also told reporters on Wednesday that their contractor Spanish travel retail company WebSky.tech added MIR's logo to their payment options without their knowledge. He said Georgian Airways asked the Spanish company as early as March 3 to remove MIR.

Shortly, Georgian Airways also released an official statement, claiming they have not sold a single ticket using the Russian MIR. The statement also explained that WebSky.tech's purchase system in Georgia was fully connected to the Bank of Georgia, a private financial institution, rendering MIR payments impossible.

"Georgian Airways and its management can have no influence over the Spanish company, which voluntarily accesses the MIR card system in its sales system. As for Georgian Airways, the company is currently in dire financial straits and is in the process of bankruptcy / rehabilitation."

The company's decision was heavily criticized by the opposition, underlining that by joining the Russian payment system, Georgian Airways is helping Russia bypass Western sanctions

and Georgian is not a loophole for Russia. UNM even has a small rally in front of the company's office.

"Maximum effectiveness of financial sanctions against Russia is one of the main guarantees of the security of the Georgian state - the easing of sanctions for the occupier is a betrayal of Georgia's national interests!", the European Georgia said in a statement.

On the other hand, Georgian Dream MP Mikheil Sarjveladze spoke of attempts by the 'radical opposition' and affiliated media-channels to come up with baseless provocative topics.

The Russian payment system is used in Turkey, Vietnam, Armenia, Uzbekistan, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, as well as in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, which Russia has illegally recognized as 'independent states'.

Russia designed Mir in 2014 following the annexation of Crimea to avoid financial sanctions. Since July 2021, the Russian government has switched to Mir to allocate budget funds, including salaries, pensions and scholarships for civil servants.

## The United Nations Observance Of International Women's Day Joint Statement

8 March 2022

This joint statement is issued by the United Nations system in Georgia, the Delegation of the European Union to Georgia, the Council of Europe Office in Georgia the Embassies to Georgia of Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Estonia, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Latvia, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Norway, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and the United States.

The world needs gender equality - today and every day. With new and ongoing conflicts, a climate crisis and shrinking democratic space, we are at risk of a major recession globally in gender equality.

This year, the theme for the United Nations observance of

International Women's Day is "Gender Equality Today for a Sustainable Tomorrow". We want to recognize the contribution of women and girls all over the world who are leading the charge towards adaptation, mitigation, and response to climate change, in building a more sustainable future for all.

Women and girls are effective and powerful leaders and change-makers for effective climate action, participating in sustainability initiatives around the world and their leadership results in more effective climate action. We must expand the opportunities and help remove the constraints to empower women and girls to have a voice and be equal players in decision-ma-

king related to climate change.

In parallel to the global climate emergency, the world and humanity are challenged by conflicts and humanitarian disasters. A full-scale war in Ukraine increased risks to regional and global peace and security. Escalating violence has already resulted in many civilian casualties and deaths including women and children, has produced more than 1.7 million refugees, and has forced hundreds of thousands of others to flee their homes within the country. Civilians always pay the highest price.

While frontline soldiers and military personnel - both men and women - are risking their lives and families are torn apart,

women and girls are impacted differently and disproportionately by war and conflict. That is why, in line with Women, Peace and Security Agenda, it is essential that women are included in the decision-making and peace-making processes. Here as everywhere, women are at the forefront of the humanitarian response. We must ensure that the specific needs and the health, rights and dignity of women and girls are safeguarded now and going forward.

The UN and the partners are committed to delivering life-saving support to all people affected by conflict, wherever they are, particularly women, children, older persons, those belonging to minorities, and

those with disabilities, internally displaced, refugees, and stranded third country nationals at this time of greatest need. Partnerships with civil society, women's rights activists and peacemakers are crucial.

On this International Women's Day, we, the international community in Georgia, extend compassion and solidarity to people affected by conflicts, in this difficult time. Solidarity must be extended without any discrimination. We join the UN Secretary General's call for an immediate cessation of hostilities. This conflict must stop now. The people in Georgia and the world demand it. We must give peace a chance.

THURSDAY MARCH 10	
Day	Rain High: 7°C
Night	Light rain Low: 2°C
FRIDAY MARCH 11	
Day	Snow High: 4°C
Night	Snow Low: 0°C

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