Effects of the US-Iran war on agriculture

There is a looming shortage of fertilisers and a global food crisis as a result of the ongoing war between the US/Israel and Iran.

This is not just the case of your columnist playing a prophet of doom; it is a fact that because of this war, fuel prices have begun to go up, and have made the cost of transport bigger. Fertiliser prices have already begun to rise, mainly because there is political instability in some of the fertiliser-producing countries, as well as a blockage in the route used to deliver the fertilisers to Africa and Asia, as well as other regions in the world.

The Green Revolution that transformed agricultural production in the 20th Century was characterised with the introduction of new high-yielding crop varieties, synthetic fertilisers, chemical pesticides, herbicides, and large scale irrigation.

Michael J. Ssali

Farmer's Say

This is what made it possible to produce food for the rapidly growing population.

Ironically, the massive increase in agricultural production was linked to the fossil fuel industry that is actually now blamed for driving climate change, according to Adam Hanieh, professor of political economy and global development, SOAS University of London, and author of the book *Crude Capitalism: Oil, Corporate Power, and the Making of the World Market*.

Hanieh remarks that before the mid-20th Century farmers mainly relied on organic inputs such as manure and compost to maintain soil nutrients, but today, the new high-yielding crop varieties can only deliver their expected output through larger and repeated applications of industrial fertilisers, especially nitrogen-based products like urea and ammonium nitrate. He further says 70 percent of global ammonia exports originate from the Middle East, with Saudi Arabia ranked the world's second largest exporter of ammonia. He goes on to say sulphur, out of which phosphate fertilisers are made, is another basic input into modern agriculture and that most of the fertilisers pass through the Strait of Hormuz that the current war has made impassable.

Another scholar, Matt Simpson, CEO of Brazil Potash, says: "As geopolitical tensions with Iran continue to reshape global trade flows, one under-the-radar impact is beginning to surface in agriculture: a tightening fertiliser market that could quietly drive price increases ---Growers are making planting and input decisions in real time, and higher fertiliser costs can lead to reduced application rates or shifts toward lower-yield crops."