

Help Ukraine – stop sending food and clothes

Edinburgh-based Scot, Oleg Dmitriev, is a member of the Sunflower Scotland movement and he has family in Ukraine.

Earlier this year the charity began by loading trucks of humanitarian aid and taking these right into the centre of Ukrainian cities, but now he warns that donating food and clothing to Ukrainians is hurting their economy – and it must stop.

Oleg is just returning to Scotland from another trip to Ukraine where he and his team have delivered supplies. He explained: “I was driving from Kharkiv, and had just entered Kyiv when the missile attack happened. Kharkiv had been badly hit. Two missiles landed in Kyiv and all the media are writing about that, but actually there are about five missile attacks each day outside the city.

“We were okay, although in Zhytomyr it was a total blackout, but overnight the city services partially restored power to homes.

“The truth is, in villages around Kharkiv, Zaporizhzhia,

Donbas, such attacks happen everyday and nobody reports anything – and I have been in much worse situations.”

Shot on the road in Ukraine

SHOP LOCAL

Dmitriev explained that the team now buys supplies at wholesale outlets in Ukraine and then delivers the supplies as food bags to front-line villages such as Borova on the left bank of the Oskil River, where there is conflict. He said that he saw the villages there, including Borova, and around 40% of the houses have been destroyed. What he is doing has inherent dangers, but he said that he and his team have military grade bullet proof vests (one of the few charities which does) and they are very strict about health and safety protocols.

“Ukraine produces so much food and clothing, it’s top quality and it is cheap. When the UK sends free aid, it’s hurting Ukraine’s economy – in the same way Putin’s missiles damage Ukraine’s power stations. Sunflower Scotland has been buying Ukraine-made food since September.”



A Ukrainian supermarket – well-stocked with food
Dmitriev was on the road when he spoke to The Edinburgh Reporter. He said: “I have a van loaded with food from Ukraine bringing it to Scotland. Ukraine produces a lot of food and exports food. It is one of the major global food exporters. The reason why British charities are sending food is that they are being given the wrong impression by the mass media. It is so disappointing that people in Scotland are being told to send food which is so expensive. People don’t have all the information, and that is the main reason why I have planned to give a talk in Edinburgh in December.”

He was quite frank, and said: “We humbly admit our mistakes – we were mistaken to take lorry loads of goods to Ukraine before. But now we have learned and we have changed. Sending free food and clothes is not the answer.

“We have to get the food to where it is needed – in frontline villages. There is a better selection of foodstuffs in Ukraine

than in Edinburgh. All the British charities which are sending food and clothes to Ukraine are not doing the right thing – food in Ukraine is about half the price it is in the UK.”

He said “it is madness” to send more expensive food and clothes from the UK when the Ukraine economy has to survive, but that the food does not necessarily get to those who need it most, which is a big problem.





He continued: "Ukraine produces a lot and the shelves in the city supermarkets are full with both local and imported foods. Our job is to move it to where it is needed. I went to a wholesale market with my team where we can buy in bulk, and we delivered to frontline villages. You have plenty of food in the country but it is frontline villages which have suffered

so badly.”

He is also critical of the mainstream media such as the BBC or Channel Four and other mass media for the way they are reporting the news from the cities.

He said: “They are not reporting that Ukraine produces all the food it needs, and much more, for export. We are led to believe that Ukraine is struggling, and is without food and other essentials. In reality it is just the opposite. It is almost criminal that we don’t have this information and we act on the basis that we need to send food or clothing. War-torn Kharkiv produces boots and clothes for civilians as well as the army.

“The mass media should be making documentaries and telling the real story. It is their job to tell the truth.”



TALK ON 7 DECEMBER

Dmitriev is hosting a talk for the business community entitled **“The truth that mass media don’t tell you about Ukraine, and how to stop hurting Ukraine”**.

It will be held at Morton Fraser’s offices on 7 December 2022.

He said: “The purpose of the talk is to tell the Scottish business community about the economic impact of the war on Ukraine, that it’s a much stronger economy than the mass media want us to believe.

As a result of the talk, business people will learn:

- how different areas are affected by the war: from the heavily damaged “red” zones to the “amber” zones that mostly suffer from air raids but otherwise keep calm and carry on
- how the mass media doesn’t report that Ukraine produces all the food it needs and much more for export
- how Ukraine produces clothes for its people and for the army, as well as for export
- that the best way to help Ukraine is to buy Ukrainian, and that’s what British charities should be doing, while sending free food and clothing in fact may hurt Ukraine’s domestic industries and cause a long lasting negative effect

Oleg invites Edinburgh-based business people to his talk on 7 December at 6pm, at Morton Fraser’s

offices Quartermile Two, 2 Lister Square, Edinburgh. EH3 9GL.

He concluded: “This war is possibly the most important thing right now, business leaders need to know what’s really happening. I look forward to seeing you!”

For more information email contact@sunflowerscotland.co.uk

Follow Sunflower Scotland on [Facebook](#) to keep up to date with fundraising events planned for December.

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/help-ukraine-and-its-economy-by-buying-in-ukraine-instead-of-sending-aid-tickets-472075970937>





Oleg in the middle of the photo in Borova, Ukraine where he along with his colleagues Daniil Ostroverkh, Chris Murphy, and David Sharke delivered food bags. The group delivered 1,080 kg to 120 families. PHOTO Sunflower Scotland