



## **NORTH KOREA EXPECTING SMALLER GRAIN HARVESTS DUE TO INCREASING TEMPERATURES**

As concerns over lean harvests and food shortages grow, North Koreans are growing more worried as rumors over worsening conditions next year make their way through North Korean communities. Temperatures in North Korea dropped sharply in July, leading to freezing that impacted the agricultural sector. From September 8-12, the temperature dropped so drastically that areas of North Korea frosted over. Mid-September temperatures then suddenly rose to levels well above average, leading fruits and vegetables to sprout new flowers.

Especially in the northern areas of the country, the strange weather patterns have led to widespread rumors of food shortages by the end of the year and beyond. While the North recorded average harvests this year, avoiding mass famine, the recently ended '150-day Battle', market restrictions, and other controls have led to rampant concerns of starvation, flood, and other threats.

North Korean Central Broadcasting reported on September 25 that Russia had provided rice aid, and again on September 28 that Vietnam had sent food aid. It appears that the food crisis has reached such proportions that the government is no longer attempting to cover it up. With the majority of people believing that they will face widespread food shortages this year, many rumors are circulating that the North Korean authorities have decided to accept food aid from abroad. As fall has already arrived, there is talk of a 'second arduous march' having begun, and there are reports of rice traders travelling around the country and buying up all the supplies.



On October 11, prices in the Yanggang Province city of Hyesan were continuing to rise, despite it being autumn. Chinese rice was being sold for 2,500 won per kilogram, and North Korean rice was going for 2,700 won. After the first 'arduous march' (mid to late 1990s), North Korean authorities supplied some limited rations after the fall harvest in order to ease food shortages. However, this year, not even these rations are available, and authorities are calling on people to provide for themselves.

This year's rice and corn harvests were smaller than previous years, and last month, the UN FAO predicted that the North would need 1.7-1.8 million tons of food aid from abroad. Kim Soon-kwon, director and founder of the International Corn Foundation, reported after a recent visit to North Korea that the country's food supplies would fall one million tons short this year. The South Korean Ministry of Unification predicted earlier in the year that without outside aid, North Korea would be 1.17 million tons short of food. North Korean citizens need 5.48 million tons of food, and as previous harvests have been around 4.31 tons, the shortage is obvious.