

DPRK STEPS UP CALLS TO RESOLVE FOOD SHORTAGES UNASSISTED IN THE NEW YEAR

While the international community has expressed concerns that it does not appear that the North Korean food crisis will be resolved this year, on January 22, the [North] Korean Workers' Party newspaper, Rodong Sinmun, carried an article emphasizing "the way to overcome the food problem is through our own labor," and stressing that the North needed to "work out our salvation by our own efforts."

In an article titled "Food Crisis that Must Be Urgently Resolved," the newspaper emphasized that it was "naïve" to think that, under the current circumstances, some entity would decide to come in and solve the food crisis, and that "aggressive efforts are necessary to resolve the food problem on the principle of working out our salvation by our own efforts."

The article explained, "Experts are saying that there is a possibility that food prices will continue to rise as food stocks around the world come up short, and many people will be hit hard," blaming global warming for desertification of agricultural land and typhoons for the destruction of crops while stressing that the cause of the North's food crisis is "the current natural climate, which is unfavorable to agricultural production."

Furthermore, the article warned that grain production in those countries on which North Korea is most reliant for food aid could drop off this year due to the global financial crisis, which could also lead to a drop in biofuel production, and as demand for grains used for the production of fuel grows, this could have further negative impact on already rising food prices.

In this year's New Year's Joint Editorial, the North Korean authorities stressed to the people of country the need for "all-out efforts" to revive the economy, and on January 15, the [North] Korean Central Broadcasting Station (KCBS) emphasized the "urgency" of resolving food issues, reporting on that day, "Nothing is more important to improving the lifestyles of the people than the food problem...the food problem must be resolved first," and, "there is no more urgent or important task than solving the eating problem."

The broadcaster stressed, just as the station did last year, that the "food problem" and "eating problem" needed to be solved through the efforts of the North Korean people, and that it was essential that all efforts be poured into meeting this year's grain production quotas. In addition, it emphasized that with the current freeze of South Korean aid and the North's shortage of fertilizer, it was important to boost production of organic fertilizer. The KCBS called for a seed revolution, double cropping of potatoes, and cultivation of beans, along with combining the efforts of agricultural and livestock industries and the development of aquaculturing, pisciculturing and fishing efforts.