

NORTH KOREANS CLAIM HARVEST YIELDS GROWING

The *Chosun Sinbo* Internet edition, a newspaper published by the pro-North Korean General Association of Korean Residents in Japan (*Chongryon*), reported on January 3 that, as North Korea's agricultural production continues to grow, grain yields similar to the bumper crop in 2005 can be seen. It also pointed out that this was in spite of damage brought on by both heavy rains and serious drought suffered last year. North Korean agricultural officials stressed to a *Chongryon* reporter visiting Pyongyang, "the North Korean agricultural sector is definitely on an upward track," and that "damage suffered by North Korea due to flooding and drought last summer was not insignificant, and economic sanctions against the North have led to the rise of a series of roadblocks toward agricultural modernization, yet through the full mobilization of the nation's capabilities and concentration of the country's efforts, these difficulties have been overcome."

An official from the DPRK ministry of agriculture, Kim Kyung Il, stated, "In light of goals we set, production was not sufficient, but definitely not at the point of causing serious difficulties with feeding the people," and he flatly rejected the idea that the country was facing a food shortage crisis.

On a related note, North Korean agricultural officials explained that a firm base for agricultural growth had been laid through successes in scientific research, and in making such research applicable to everyday use. They pointed out that through the "seed revolution," research, development, and distribution of seeds appropriate for North Korea's climate and features was accomplished, and through that, rice and corn yields could be increased. Through promotion of

agriculture as a central facet of socialist construction, people's efforts were concentrated on planting and harvesting of rice, and other farming endeavors. The *Chosun Sinbo* reported that a policy was set forth to prioritize and protect the equipment, materials, energy, and fuel necessary for farming, creating the backdrop for North Korean's agricultural efforts.