

**WFP DPRK Talking Points**  
**19 October 2007**

**KREI – Famine Report**

**1. Background**

Korea Rural Economic Institute (KREI), a South Korean state-run think-tank released a study on 18 October indicating that DPRK will likely be pushed into a famine by the August floods. The study says DPRK will suffer a 1.4 million tons food gap next year and compares the situation to the 1990s famine which killed millions of people.

Stories of famine and starvation in DPRK regularly surface, particularly in ROK media. WFP must be careful not to get caught up in public speculations but should remain factual and only comment on what we know.

**2. Q&A**

*Does WFP agree with KREI that the floods will cause a famine in DPRK?*

- WFP is very concerned over the food security situation in the DPRK following the August floods. Our assessments show that in the immediate term, many families lost homes and food stocks or had their livelihood disrupted. They are now almost completely dependent on external food aid.
- WFP's observations in the field also indicate that great damage was caused to agricultural lands of maize and rice, which will have a long-term impact on food security. It is however too early to know the full magnitude of the crop losses; official figures from the ongoing annual harvest will only be released by early next year.
- Considering the restricted access to the field and the limited availability of quality information, it is also very difficult for external parties to accurately assess the food security situation in the DPRK.

*Is it true that the DPRK will have a 1.4 million tons food gap next year?*

- The DPRK Government has confirmed to the UN that it suffers an annual cereal deficit of 1 million tons. Government estimates immediately after the floods indicate that 200,000-400,000 tons could have been lost, but these figures will only be confirmed when official harvest figures are out next year.
- As in previous years, part of this food gap will be covered by import or food aid from WFP or bilateral donors like ROK and China. WFP nevertheless remains concerned about the health and nutrition situation in the DPRK, particularly of vulnerable groups like women and children.
- WFP together with sister agency FAO will closely monitor the outcome of the harvest and the floods impact on food security levels. WFP is ready to provide

additional food assistance, including for early recovery, if requested the DPRK government and supported by donors.

## **China-DPRK Railway Issue**

### **1. Background**

WFP has been experiencing delays in arrivals of food stocks by rail from China due to a hold-up relating to DPRK's failure to return empty rail wagons. Some 7,000 tons of food has been held up at the border which has temporarily postponed food distributions under the flood emergency operation.

This is a long-standing issue between DPRK and China and WFP should avoid getting caught up in bilateral disputes.

### **2. Key Points**

- WFP now has significant amounts of food available but has been unable to deliver it. The food, some 7,000 tons of maize and wheat flour has been held up at the Chinese-DPRK border since 11 October.
- WFP is concerned over the delays, which has postponed food distributions to our beneficiaries. This humanitarian food aid is critically needed for vulnerable flood-affected families and should be transported as soon as possible.
- WFP has received notification that some rail wagons have begun loading in China and is hoping the food consignments will begin moving across the border shortly.