

**Brief on prolonged dry spell in the DPRK  
(as at 7 June 2001)**

1. In the DPRK, the Spring is normally fairly dry, but features increasing showers leading up to the monsoon season in July and August. The heavy monsoon rains support the main crops of rice and maize which are planted in June and harvested in October/November.
2. Because of the food shortages, the Spring period before June is increasingly used to grow "double crops" such as wheat barley and potatoes, which are harvested in June immediately before the main crops are planted.
3. The double crops provide only about 10 –15% of the total food supply for the year, but they are important because they are distributed by the Public Distribution System (PDS) during the lean months of July – September, before the main crops become available.
4. This year, last year's harvest was completely distributed by the PDS by the end of January (last year's crop was affected by dry weather in July). Since then, the PDS has been distributing a small ration of bilaterally provided ROK cereals. This supply is expected to be fully distributed/consumed by June/July.
5. Since 3 March there has been virtually no country-wide rains except for two days at the end of May (over 90 dry days – an apparent record). As a consequence, the double crops of wheat, barley and potatoes will be much less than normal. This means that the PDS will have even less than normal to distribute in the lean months of July – September. An FAO/WFP Crop and Food Supply Assessment Mission will look at the double crop harvest from 24 June.
6. As rain still has not fallen significantly, we are increasingly concerned about the impact on the main harvest. Maize is in the fields now, a few inches high, but the weather is hot and dry. Large numbers of people, including school children, are being mobilised to water maize by hand, using buckets. The maize crop is therefore very vulnerable.
7. Rice is also planted now, but is irrigated and thus not dependant on rain. So at present the rice is largely unaffected. However, the long dry spell has resulted in low river levels and reservoir levels, and this will affect irrigation unless they are re-charged by good rains in July.

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