

Reference Date: 09-September-2015

FOOD SECURITY SNAPSHOT

- Main season 2015 cereal production forecast to decline sharply from last year, due to prolonged dry spell
- Sharply reduced 2014/15 early season crops for second consecutive year
- Drastic reduction in food rations distributed in July and August
- Higher cereal import requirements forecast for 2014/15 marketing year (November/October)

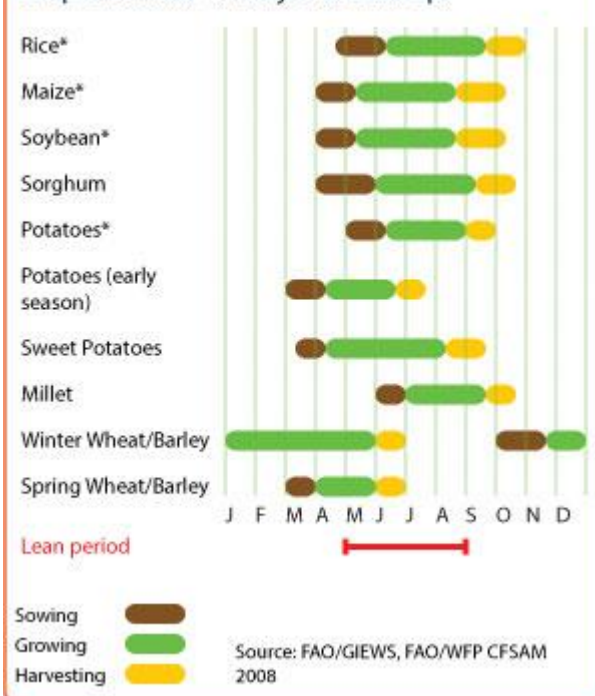
Despite some rains in July and early August, drought damage to 2015 main season cereal crops still serious

Harvesting of the 2015 main season maize, soybeans and sorghum has just started and would continue until mid-October. Harvesting of the rice crop is expected to start from late September. Severe rainfall deficits between mid-April and mid-July, coupled with short supplies of irrigation water, resulted in area reductions of the 2015 staple rice crop. The yield potential of the early-planted crops, including maize and soybeans were also adversely affected.

North and South Hwanghae, which together normally account for more than one-third of the main season cereal production, were the most affected by the dry weather. Rainfall improved between the second dekad of July to the first dekad of August over most of the country (see rainfall charts), providing some relief to crops, but were rather too late to reverse the damage already inflicted by the dry weather. The heavy rains reportedly triggered some localized floods across North Hamgyong and Rason provinces, located in the northeastern part of the country, causing severe damage to housing, infrastructure, including schools, roads and bridges. In addition, losses to stored food are likely to be high. A detailed assessment of the crop damage is not yet available, but preliminary official estimates, as of early September, indicate that only about 700 hectares of standing crops were adversely affected by floods and 125 hectares were lost, representing less than 1 percent of the area planted to the main season crops. According to remote sensing data, rains from mid-August returned to below-average levels over the main cereal producing areas, including the provinces of South and North Hwanghae and South and North Pyongan.

FAO's forecast for the 2015 rice production remains at low of 2.3 million tonnes, 12 percent below last year's drought-affected output.

Democratic People's Republic of Korea Crop calendar (*major foodcrop)



DPRK: Production of the 2014 and 2015 early season and main season food crops (*tonnes, ** 000 tonnes)

Early Season*	2010-2014	2013/14	2014/15	Change
Wheat and Barley	114 517	76 587	54 000	-30%
Potatoes	277 916	289 580	232 889	-20%
Main Season**	2010-2014	2014	2015	Change
Paddy	2 622	2 626	2 300	-12%

Early season crops sharply reduced for second consecutive year

Latest estimates, released by the Ministry of Agriculture in August, put the 2014/15 main early season potatoes at 232 889 tonnes, 20 percent down from last year, while the total winter wheat and barley harvest is estimated at 36 084 tonnes, a decrease of 32 percent compared to the previous year. Accordingly, FAO reduced its earlier forecast for the 2014/15 aggregate wheat and barley production, including also small amounts of spring wheat and barley, to 54 000 tonnes, down 30 percent year-on-year. The sharp contraction for the early season crops reflects reduced area due to shortages of seeds, following the reduced harvest of the previous year and lower yields stemming from the dry weather between April and July, which affected the crops at their final development stage.

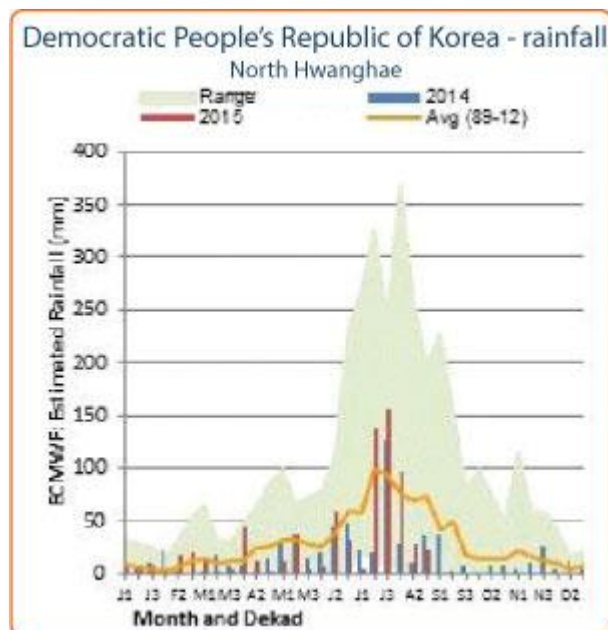
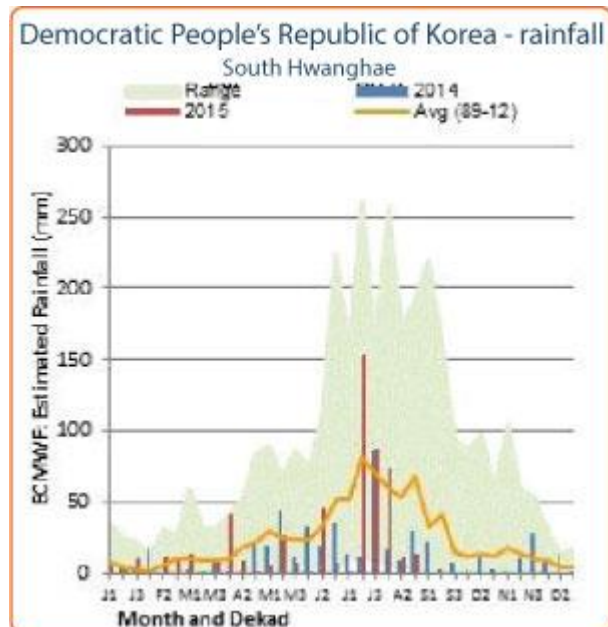
Higher cereal import requirements forecast for 2014/15 marketing year (November/October)

With total cereal equivalent requirements for the 2014/15 marketing year (November/October) estimated by FAO at 5.49 million tonnes, there is an import requirement of about 421 000 tonnes. With an expected Government import of about 300 000 tonnes of cereals, an uncovered deficit of 121 000 tonnes is forecast for the 2014/15 marketing year.

Drastic reduction in food rations distributed in July and August

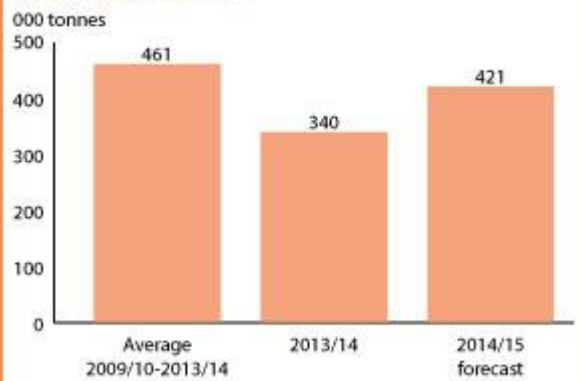
The Government has reduced the food rations for households dependent on the Public Distribution System (PDS) twice during July from 410 grams/person/day distributed between January to June 2015 to 310 grams/person/day for the first part of July and to 250 grams/person/day since mid-July (see Figure 1). While it is not unusual that the Government changes the PDS rations within a year reflecting food availability, the rations in July and August were below the three-year average and well below the food rations distributed during the same period in 2013 and 2014. This drop could be explained by the considerable reduction in the output of the early season crops. The PDS is the main system of availing food to at least 70 percent of the total population (around 18 million people).

With drought conditions and floods this season, the food security situation is likely to deteriorate from that of the previous years, when most households were already estimated to have borderline and poor food consumption rates.



Democratic People's Republic of Korea

Total cereal imports



Notes: Total cereal includes rice in milled terms. Split year refers to individual crop marketing years.

Source: FAO/GIEWS Country Cereal Balance Sheets

Fig.1: DPRK - PDS average ration size
grams per person per day

