



GIEWS Country Brief Democratic People's Republic of Korea

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FOOD SECURITY SNAPSHOT

- Production prospects of 2018/19 early season crops unfavourable
- Aggregate crop production in 2018 estimated at ten-year low due to unfavourable weather conditions and limited supplies of agricultural inputs
- Cereal import requirements estimated at elevated level
- About 40 percent of population estimated to be food insecure and in urgent need of assistance

Prospects for 2018/19 early season crops unfavourable

The harvest of the early season crops (winter/spring wheat and barley, and potatoes) is expected to start in early June. Precipitation since the beginning of the season in November have been below average with erratic spatial and temporal distribution over most of the country. Limited snow coverage, due to exceptionally low snowfall during the winter months, exposed wheat and barley to freezing temperatures, with consequent loss of germinated crops. In addition, below-average spring rains in March and April, critical months for crop development, coupled with reduced soil moisture that normally comes from snow melting, further affected vegetation conditions of already weak crops (see VCI map).

According to a joint FAO/WFP Rapid Food Security Assessment Mission (for full report visit [GIEWS website](#)), conducted from 29 March to 12 April, the production of early crops is forecast at 307 000 tonnes, 24 percent below the 2017 above average level. In addition to the unfavourable weather conditions, the expected decrease is attributed to shortages of irrigation water and other agricultural inputs, including fertilizers and crop protection materials. Rains remained below average in April and, if they do not improve in the next two dekads of May, the final output for early season crops may be even lower.

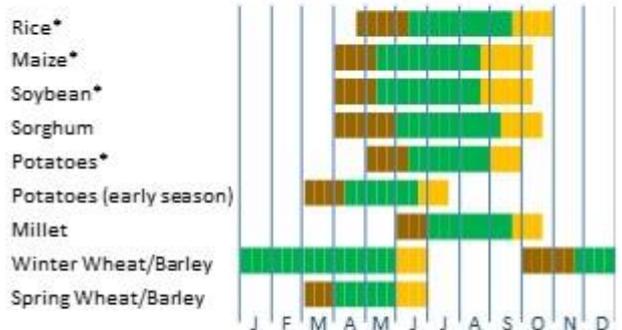
Aggregate food crop production in 2018 estimated at ten-year low

Harvesting of the 2018 main season crop was completed in September/October last year. An extended period of below-average rains, coupled with abnormal high temperatures (up to 40°C) from mid-July to mid-August 2018 and shortage of water for irrigation, affected the 2018 main season crops during the critical pollination stages, resulting in crop losses and sharply

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Crop Calendar

(*major foodcrop)



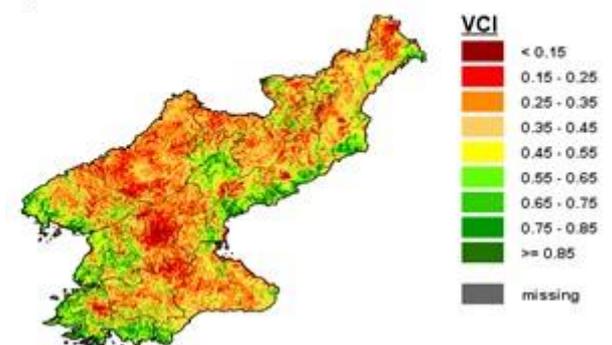
lean period

Sowing
Growing
Harvesting

Source: FAO/GIEWS, FAO/WFP CFSAM 2008.

Democratic People's Republic of Korea - Vegetation condition index (VCI)

April 2019



Source: FAO/GIEWS Earth Observation System.

reduced yields. The effects of the dry weather conditions were compounded by shortages of fuel and electricity, which negatively affected water pumping, as well as by reduced supply agricultural inputs. According to official estimates, the 2018 main food crop production, mostly rice, maize and soybeans, has decreased throughout the whole country. The highest losses were registered in the main producing provinces, namely North and South Hwanghae, North and South Phyongan and South and North Hamgyong, collectively known as the country's "Cereal Bowl". Heavy rains in late August to the first dekad of September, triggered flash floods in parts of the main crop producing areas of North and South Hwanghae provinces, causing damage to crops just before the harvest. As a result, the 2018 main season food crop production (in cereal equivalent and paddy terms) is officially estimated at a low level of 4.5 million tonnes, 11 percent below the 2017 average output.

Overall, the 2018 aggregate food crop production, including the ongoing 2018/19 early season crops, is estimated at 4.9 million tonnes, 12 percent below the previous year's near-average level and the lowest since 2008/09.

Cereal import requirements in 2018/19 estimated at elevated level

Total cereal import requirements in 2018/19 (November/October) are estimated by the FAO/WFP Rapid Food Security Assessment Mission to reach 1.59 million tonnes, three times higher than the previous five-year average. This is mainly the result of the reduced production and higher-than-usual post-harvest losses, as shortages of fuel and electricity hampered the timely transport and processing of crops as well as the ventilation of stocks. With commercial imports officially planned at 200 000 tonnes and food assistance (already received or pledged) set at about 21 200 tonnes, the uncovered deficit is estimated at an elevated level of about 1.36 million tonnes.

About 40 percent of population estimated to be food insecure and in urgent need of assistance

According to the FAO/WFP Rapid Food Security Assessment Mission, large numbers of people suffer from low food consumption levels and poor diet, with a reduced intake of animal and vegetable proteins. Most of interviewed households reported severe food-related coping strategies, including reducing consumption by adults for children to eat and reducing meal sizes. Urban households, who normally rely on relatives in rural areas to access food and diversify their consumption, are no longer able to do so to the same extent, due to increasing food shortages faced in the rural areas.

Overall, the FAO/WFP Rapid Food Security Assessment Mission estimated that 10.1 million people (40 percent of the total population) are food insecure and in urgent need for food assistance. The situation could further deteriorate during the lean season between May and September, if no proper and urgent humanitarian actions are taken.

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Food Crop Production

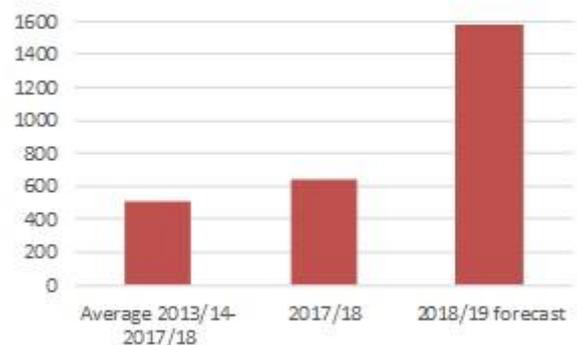
	2013-2017			change 2018/2017
	average	2017	2018	
	000 tonnes			percent
MAIN SEASON	5 178	5 105	4 546	-11.0
Paddy	2 479	2 383	2 088	-12.4
Maize	2 207	2 200	1 876	-14.7
Other cereals	117	151	197	30.5
Potatoes	166	148	249	68.2
Soybeans	210	223	135	-39.5
EARLY SEASON	345	404	307	-24.0
Wheat&barley	61	83	57	-31.3
Potatoes	284	321	250	-22.1
Total	5 523	5 509	4 853	-11.9

Note: percentage change calculated from unrounded data.
Source: CBS 2018/2019 early season crop mission forecast.

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Cereals Imports

000 tonnes



Note: Includes rice in milled terms. Split year refers to individual crop marketing years (for rice, calendar year of second year shown).

Source: FAO/GIEWS Country Cereal Balance Sheets.