

Overview

For the last eighteen months, a long period of abnormally dry weather in DPR Korea (DPRK) has led to lower agricultural production, reduced access to water for drinking and irrigation, and led to a deterioration of health, nutrition and sanitary conditions. At least 70 per cent of those who are currently relying on Public Distribution System and are thus vulnerable to fluctuation in production (18 million people), could be seriously impacted by food shortages if alternative food resources are not made available.

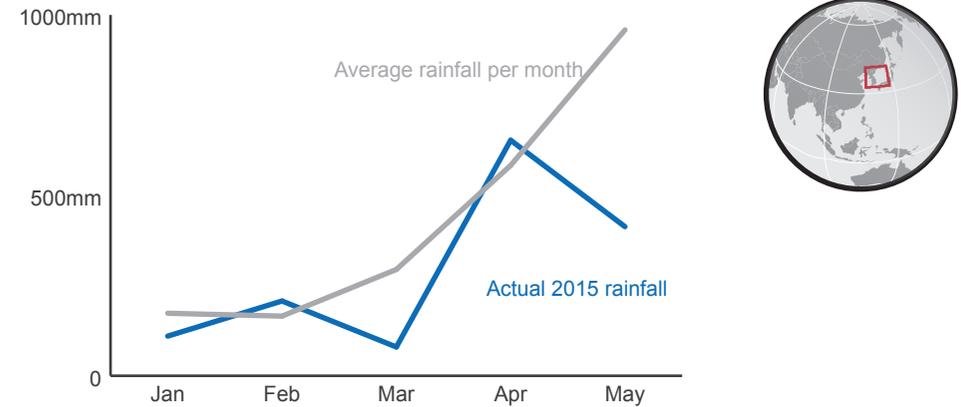
According to official meteorological data, in 2015, all provinces in DPRK have experienced less rainfall than the historical average, with the most significant precipitation shortfalls being recorded in North Hwanghae and Kangwon Provinces. This is supported by FAO's Global Information and Early Warning System (GIEWS) which reported that remote-sensed data indicated that most of the country has received well below average rainfall in April 2015. Of main concern are North and South Hwanghae Provinces, which account for more than one third of arable land for paddy cultivation in the country. With higher than average temperatures and lower than average rainfall, a partial failure of the early harvest (June/July) is expected. If weather conditions continue, the main crop harvest (September/October) will also be severely impacted.

The four provinces where communities are most affected by the impact of the drought are North and South Hwanghae, South Hamgyong and South Pyongan.

Response

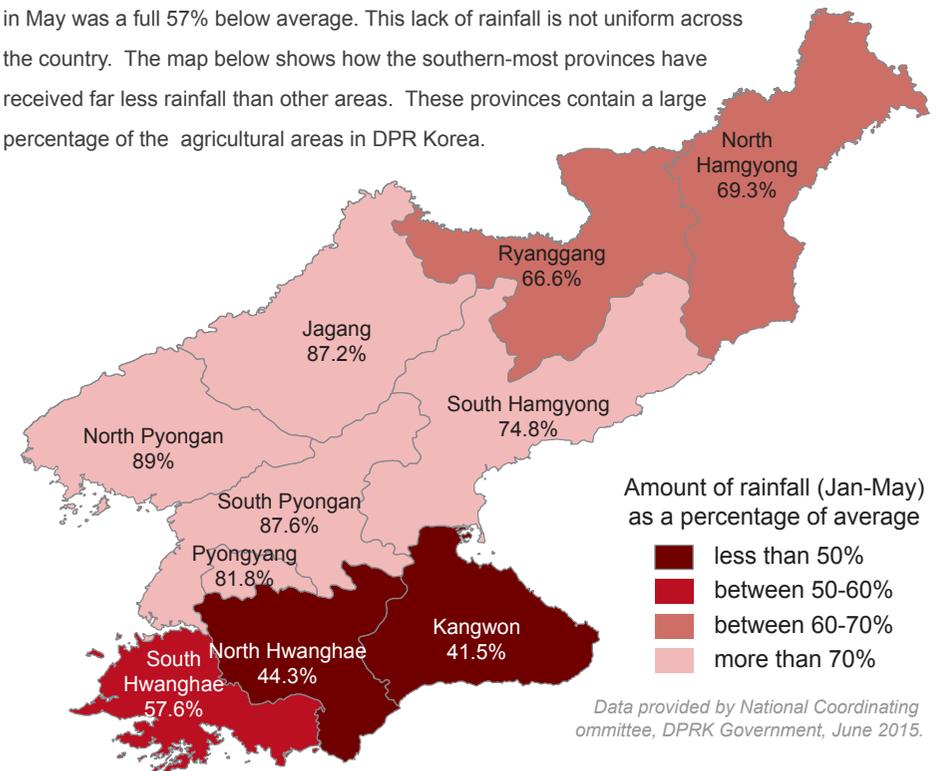
In response to the dry conditions, the DPRK Government has attempted to mitigate the impact of the drought by mobilizing sections of the population to assist with plantation and manual irrigation as well as investing in new water resources, repairing water pumps and irrigation canals and introducing water-saving farming techniques.

The Humanitarian Country Team are working with the Government to monitor the situation as well as releasing in-country stockpiles and adjusting current programmes to target the most affected based on observed needs and available information.

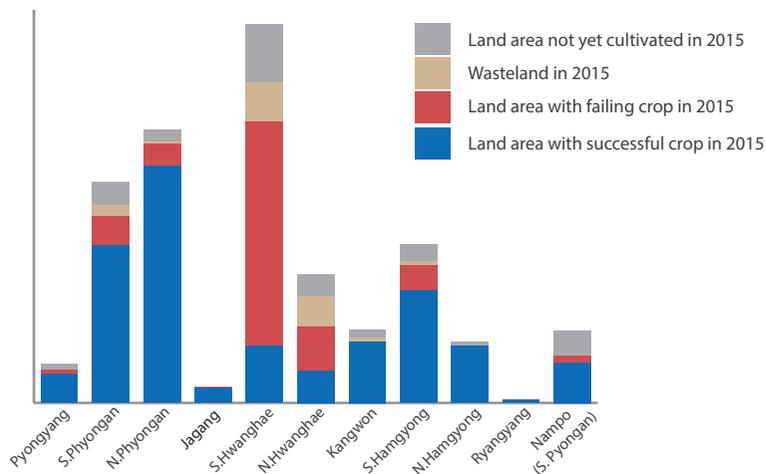


FAO Global Information and Early Warning System, DPRK Food Security Snapshot, June 2015

The graph above shows how the rainfall across DPR Korea has been erratic and in May was a full 57% below average. This lack of rainfall is not uniform across the country. The map below shows how the southern-most provinces have received far less rainfall than other areas. These provinces contain a large percentage of the agricultural areas in DPR Korea.



Data provided by National Coordinating Committee, DPRK Government, June 2015.



Status of arable land in 2015 per Province

Food Security and Agriculture

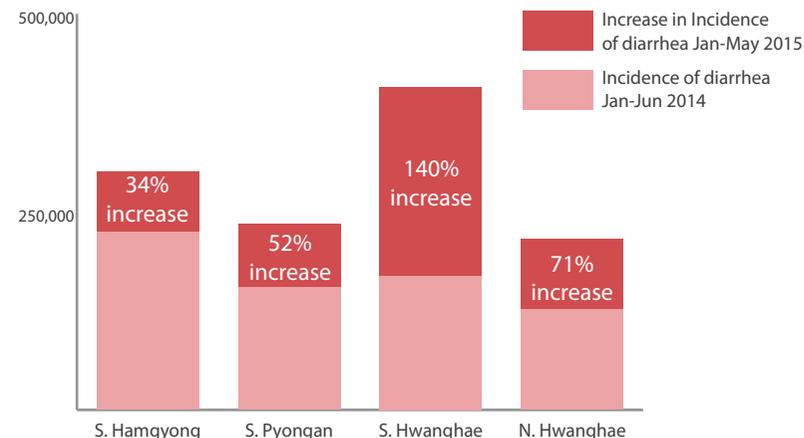
The State Committee for Emergency and Disaster Management (SCEDM) has reported that nine per cent of agricultural land has become unarable due to the drought in 2014. Most of the damage has been concentrated in North and South Hwanghae, where 33 per cent is currently considered unusable for agricultural purposes. With a lower agricultural yield in 2014 and continuing dry weather it is expected that production will be lower in the September harvest for the main cropping season. Planting of the 2015 main season of rice and maize crops normally starts in April and continues until mid-June, however the dry conditions have delayed planting/transplanting operations and is therefore likely to result in area reductions. In June 2015, the DPRK Government reported that 31 per cent (136,245 ha) of transplanted rice areas have suffered from serious water shortages and another 6.3 per cent (34,339 ha) would not be planted due to water shortages. Maize has also been particularly affected as it is grown under rain fed conditions. In an effort to maximize the planting period, the Government mobilised people to replant damaged farms, but it is too early to estimate the success of this exercise.

Nutrition

At the household level, food shortages occur chronically and consistently, peaking during the lean period between July and September. PDS-dependent households, typically the more vulnerable given the lack of self-sufficiency, cope by receiving support from relatives on cooperative farms, reducing quantities consumed, gathering wild foods, and diluting meals with water. The current nutritional situation, in DPRK, particularly among children is of significant concern. The chronic malnutrition (stunting) rate among under-five children remains high at 28%, while acute malnutrition (wasting) affects 4% of children under-five. Micronutrient deficiencies are of particular concern. Data from UNICEF-supported Community Management of Acute Malnutrition (CMAM) programme shows that there has been a 38 per cent increase in children being treated for severe acute malnutrition (SAM) in 2014 compared to 2013, coinciding with the onset of the drought. These figures reflect the deteriorating nature of the situation since mid-2014, in terms of increasing incidence of childhood illnesses associated with higher prevalence of under nutrition and higher utilization of CMAM services. Exacerbating this situation will be shortages in oral rehydration salts (ORS) needed to prevent death from diarrhoea. There are already indications that the impact of the drought is stretching the current ability of the health services to treat diarrhoea.

Health and WASH

Many communities rely on domestic water wells for drinking but due to the drought the quality and availability of water has been impacted. Field observations conducted by UN agencies and NGOs reported many water reservoirs are drying or completely dry and discussions with farmers identified that wells are being dug several meters deeper in order to access water. In DPRK between 2009 and 2014, sanitation coverage reportedly increased at national level from 55 per cent to 83 per cent and access to improved drinking water increased from 99 per cent to 100 per cent. However, during droughts and floods it is common that the incidence of waterborne diseases will increase, aggravated by non-hygienic conditions. Initial reports provided by the Ministry of Public Health, supported by field observations, show an increase in the incidence of diarrhoea, particularly in the most affected four provinces between January and the end of May, compared with the same period in 2014.



Comparison of incidence of diarrhea from Jan-Jun 2014 and Jan-May 2015. Ministry of Public Health

DPR Korea has faced chronic underfunding for humanitarian programmes for the past decade. Persistent underfunding has meant that UN agencies have been forced to significantly reduce the assistance they provide. In 2015, the UN has requested US\$104 to address critical needs in DPR Korea, of which only US\$33 million (32%) has been received. In 2014 UN programmes were only 42% funded. To respond to the immediate needs of people affected by the drought the UNCT requires a further **\$39 million.**