

## **Urgent food assistance called for**

The World Food Program (WFP) conducted a joint food assessment in collaboration with the Democratic People's Republic of Korea in the period from November 26 to December 7, 2018.

According to the outcome, the total food production of the DPRK as of last year amounted to 4,951,000 tons, which has dwindled by 503,000 tons vis-à-vis the previous year of 2017.

Reduced food output in the DPRK is primarily attributable to natural disasters such as high temperature, drought and deluge. In July and August, 2018, the highest-ever temperature was recorded in almost all parts of the territory in the history of meteorological observation. Worse still, drought kicked in for scores of days, and severe floods played havoc with north and south Hwanghae provinces - major agrarian areas in late August, which resulted in significant reduction of output of basic crops.

Sanctions regime restricting the delivery of farming materials in need is another major reason.

According to the information from the Ministry of Agriculture and other relevant organs, there is a dreadful restriction by sanctions on imports of all sorts of metal farming facilities such as tractors, harvesters, sowing machines and others as well as chemical fertilizer, pesticide and herbicide under the pretext of “dual purposes”. In addition, restrictive measures on imports of refined petroleum are hindering the supply of fuel to the agricultural sector.

Sanctions are having negative impact on assistance projects pursued by international organizations in the agricultural sector. To name just a few, delivery of a few items such as mobile water pumps offered by the FAO was delayed for almost 5 months last year and even import of a small dose of reagent as a sample for the local training course on African Swine Fever hosted by the FAO in January, 2019 was denied for the mere reason that they were not approved by the sanctions committee. In addition, FAO applied with the sanctions committee to exempt delivery of farming materials for future projects in November last year, but to no avail till date. These are just a few examples related to restriction on delivery of farming materials. All in all, it vindicates that humanitarian assistance from the UN agencies is terribly politicized and how barbaric and inhuman sanctions are.

The government of the DPRK is channeling all its efforts on agriculture while taking measures to import food. As an immediate task, it is endeavoring to address the current food situation by way of increasing the output of early and basic crops.

Even though it would import 200,000 tons of food and produce about 400,000 tons of early crops in the coming months, it would still face food shortage given the shortfall of 1,486,000 tons.

Under these circumstances, starting from January, average food ration per capita for a family of blue or white collar workers would dwindle to 300g (compared to State food supply standard of 550g). But in case of hitting the target of producing extra 400,000 tons of early crops as planned, the food ratio would increase to 310g per head in July.

In this context, the DPRK government calls on international organizations to urgently respond to addressing the food situation in the DPRK in line with their missions with a view to contributing to implementation of sustainable developmental goals.