



Emergency and Rehabilitation Division

DEMOCRATIC PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF KOREA



“Emergency support to improve food security of vulnerable farming families during the autumn planting season 2013”

OSRO/DRK/302/CHA

FINAL REPORT

FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

CERF	Central Emergency Response Fund
DPRK	Democratic People's Republic of Korea
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Agricultural inputs shortage, especially lack of improved seed, fertilizer and plastic sheets is one of the main causes for low agricultural productivity and cause for food insecurity in the country. The already limited availability of wheat seed in the country has been affected by a prolonged dry spell in 2012 which has impacted negatively both on yields of winter wheat and barley, which were then at the flowering stage and reduced the production as well as seed availability for the next planting season.

In response, through the underfunded emergencies window of the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF), USD 1000 000 were made available for FAO project OSRO/DRK/302/CHA, entitled “Emergency support to improve food security of vulnerable farming families during the autumn planting season 2013”. The project was implemented from 17 September 2013 to 30 June 2014.

The key objective of the project is to safeguard the lives of the food insecure farming families in the targeted cooperative farms by increasing the production of wheat during the 2013 autumn planting season through the provision of wheat seed and urea fertilizer. A field mission was conducted in June 2014 to collect information on wheat production in the assisted cooperative farms following the harvest.

The project provided 480 tonnes of wheat seed and 700 tonnes of urea fertilizer. The two inputs were used on 2,400 ha of land. The project achieved on average an increase one tonne of wheat yield per hectare and produced 7,200 tonnes of wheat. This is 50 percent of yield increase per hectare compare to wheat yield in 2012. The yield increase will enhance more food availability in the targeted areas and will benefit 80,000 beneficiaries as well as increase wheat seed availability for the next planting season.

Over the past several years, numerous FAO emergency food security assistance projects have demonstrated the value of small-scale interventions involving the distribution of inputs such as seed, fertilizer and plastic sheeting. These interventions, coupled with technical assistance and training, can have a positive impact on improving household-level food and nutrition security and the livelihoods of vulnerable farmers by contributing to increased production of cereals. Resource mobilization, however, remains a serious challenge to addressing DPRK’s protracted emergency in the agriculture sector. Despite the continued support received from CERF, the need for agricultural inputs in the country remains enormous, and continued support from the international community will be essential to meeting needs within the agriculture sector.

1. INTRODUCTION

Despite some progress made in the last three years to increase agriculture productivity, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) still suffers widespread food shortages and displays high rates of malnutrition compared to other countries in the region. The National Nutrition Survey conducted in October 2012, showed a slight improvement in overall malnutrition rates despite great variances between provinces.

Agricultural inputs shortage, especially lack of improved seed, fertilizer and plastic sheets is one of the main causes for low agricultural productivity and cause for food insecurity in the country. The already limited availability of wheat seed in the country has been affected by a prolonged dry spell in 2012 which has impacted negatively both on yields of winter wheat and barley, which were then at the flowering stage and reduced the production as well as seed availability for the next planting season.

Additionally the prospects for the 2013 agricultural year are once more threatened by fertilizer shortage. Fertilizer production in-country is very limited, with factories producing greatly below capacity, and there are little carryover stocks, as most available fertilizer in 2013 was applied and will be applied under the main crops paddy rice and maize which are expected to be harvested in September-October 2014. The problem has been further exacerbated by the increase of export taxes on fertilizer in China (the major exporter of fertilizer to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea) adding to the cost of imports. Therefore, it was vital to get better prepared for the autumn planting season to avoid further deterioration of food and nutrition security during the next lean season.

Supporting better agricultural practices will mean that communities are more self-sufficient in producing enough to supply and feed themselves and other areas of the country. In the process this leads to the spread of food security and human wellbeing.

1.1 Project background

In DPRK there are two agricultural seasons: Spring season starts end of February (potato, wheat and barley planting) and harvest in June. Preparation for the main season starts in April and May. After the harvest of the spring crops in June in the same plot of land the main crops paddy rice, maize and soybean plants. This practices is called double cropping, harvesting two crops in one year from the same plot of land. For double cropping timely provision of agricultural inputs such as seed, fertilizer and plastic sheets is very crucial.

The central, south-western and south eastern parts of the country, mainly North and South Hwanghae, North and South Pyongan, Pyongyang and Nampo collectively named the 'cereal bowl' produce most of the country's cereal crops. These provinces have relatively suitable land for production of the early and main crops. Nevertheless, without sufficient seed and fertilizer, production in the 'cereal bowl' surplus areas cannot reach levels whereby food may be transferred to deficit areas in support of the neediest communities. Provision of seed and fertilizer to produce food locally is therefore an efficient means of increasing food availability for vulnerable groups and to improve their food security and nutrition situation.

1.2 Financial contribution of the Donor

In response, through the underfunded emergencies window of the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF), USD 1000 000 were made available for FAO project OSRO/DRK/302/CHA, entitled “Emergency support to improve food security of vulnerable farming families during the autumn planting season 2013”. The project was implemented from 17 September 2013 to 30 June 2014.

1.3 Project objectives

The key objective of the project is to safeguard the lives of the food insecure farming families in the targeted cooperative farms by increasing the production of wheat during the 2013 autumn planting season through the provision of wheat seed and urea fertilizer.

1.4 Planned beneficiaries

The project aims to target 50 beneficiary cooperative farms, comprising of about 20,000 households with about 80,000 direct beneficiaries, of which 30 percent are children below 18 years, around 51 percent are female and nine percent are elderly people in the ‘cereal bowl’ region; North and South Pyongan provinces, North and South Hwanghae provinces and Pyongyang and Nampo cities.

2. PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

2.1 Implementation arrangement

The project was implemented by the FAO DPRK office under the technical and administrative supervision of the FAO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific and with additional support from FAO China. In DPRK, FAO’s activities are coordinated by the National Committee for FAO from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The counterpart Government institution responsible for project implementation was the Ministry of Agriculture.

2.2 Main project activities

The Ministry of Agriculture and FAO selected a total of 50 cooperative farms from 34 counties of two cities and four provinces. A total of 485 tonnes of wheat seed and 700 tonnes of urea fertilizer were procured and distributed to beneficiary cooperative farms. Each cooperative farm on average received 10 tonnes of wheat seed and 13 tonnes of urea fertilizer. FAO and the Ministry of Agriculture monitored the arrival of wheat seed and fertilizer at Nampo port and proceeded with distribution to the project counties. A field mission was carried out to monitor the delivery of the wheat and fertilizer to the beneficiary cooperative farms in February 2014. In June 2014, information on production of wheat was collected from the cooperative farms.

2.3 Actual beneficiaries

A total of 485 tonnes wheat seed and 700 tonnes of urea fertilizer were distributed to 50 cooperative farms in 34 counties, enabling 20 000 vulnerable farming families (800 00 people)

to improve their household-level food and nutrition security through enhanced production of wheat.

3. PROJECT IMPACT

Improved seed and fertilizer are the two key agricultural inputs to increase crop productivity and ensure food availability. In DPRK in most cases the two inputs are in short supply. The already limited availability of wheat seed in the country has been affected by a prolonged dry spell in 2012. Fertilizer production in-country is very limited, with factories producing greatly below capacity, and mostly the imported fertilizer applied to the main season crops. Therefore, CERF funding came at the right time to address the critical shortage of wheat seed and urea fertilizer for spring cropping season.

The expected outcome of this project was to increase wheat yield per unit area. In 2012 the average yield of wheat was 2.0 tonnes/ha, the project expected an average increased yield of 600 kg/ha to provide a yield of 2.6 tonnes/ ha in June 2014.

The project provided 480 tonnes of wheat seed and 700 tonnes of urea fertilizer. The two inputs were used on 2,400 ha of land. The project achieved on average an increase one tonne of wheat yield per hectare and produced 7,200 tonnes of wheat. This is 50 percent of yield increase per hectare compare to wheat yield in 2012. The yield increase will enhance more food availability in the targeted areas and will benefit 80,000 beneficiaries as well as increase wheat seed availability for the next planting season.

4. RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

For the last three years with CERF support FAO contributed positively in increase crop yield in DPRK. However, still the country is not producing enough food to feed its population. Therefore, provision of essential agriculture inputs such as improved seed, fertilizer and plastic sheets should be continue.

Although an increase in wheat yield can be attributed to a variety of environmental and agronomic factors, the outcome of this project is a clear indication of the importance of the timely provision of improved wheat seed and fertilizer. The increase in wheat production achieved under this project was essential to improving the food security situation of vulnerable farming families in the targeted areas.

Over the past several years, numerous FAO emergency food security assistance projects have demonstrated the value of small-scale interventions involving the distribution of inputs such as seed, fertilizer and plastic sheeting. These interventions, coupled with technical assistance and training, can have a positive impact on improving household-level food and nutrition security and the livelihoods of vulnerable farmers by contributing to increased production of cereals. Resource mobilization, however, remains a serious challenge to addressing DPRK's protracted emergency in the agriculture sector. Despite the continued support received from CERF, the need for agricultural inputs in the country remains enormous, and continued support from the international community will be essential to meeting needs within the agriculture sector.