
Plan of Action

Emergency food relief for N. Korea

The statement excerpted here was issued by the Schiller Institute on June 12:

Emergency action is required to avert mass starvation in North Korea. International relief agencies warn that at least one-fifth of the 23 millions of people in North Korea are endangered by starvation or malnutrition. This means 4.6 million people, of whom 2.6 million are children. Millions more are living in a near-death condition. As of late May, many of the 2,000 Food Distribution Centers, through which North Korea has been distributing minimal food allocations through a civilian ration-coupon system, are absolutely empty. As of June 20, the national food system will be at the shutdown point.

Two consecutive, poor growing seasons in 1995-96, in conditions of floods (hail and other crop-damaging weather), inadequate infrastructure, and a collapsing agriculture system, along with the lack of international aid, have resulted in famine-scale food shortages.

The 1996 North Korean cereals grains harvest (rice, wheat, and all coarse grains) was barely 3 millions of tons; and 1995, five million tons; in contrast, between 1985 and 1990, annual total grains output was in the range of 6.3 to 8.8 million tons. Food rations have gone down to between 100 and 200 grams per person per day. To bring them up to the minimum level of 450 grams per person daily, the food deficit, until autumn, when this year's harvest will start, is *1 million tons* of grains products, at minimum, according to Miseror, a church aid organization. As of the time of writing of this release, donor-nations have made no commitment to provide this minimum level of aid. . . .

In the short term, the task before us is to supply food aid, in the tonnages required, and to provide logistical support for the delivery of the relief food to all in need. In the medium to longer term, there are certain other humanitarian aid requirements, to prevent any recurrence of famine.

The urgently needed food stocks can be mustered, despite short world food stockpiles, and severe *underproduction* of food internationally. At the same time, mobilizing to meet the famine emergency in North Korea poses the necessity to mobilize also to provide food relief in Central Africa, and any other point of need. It is a matter of political will to feed the hungry. . . .

An essential part of the food relief mobilization required, is to make null and void, the constraints imposed by the World Trade Organization since it went into force on Jan. 1, 1995, on the rights of nation-states to foster increased agricultural output, and to provide for their own national food security by developing their farm and economic output potential. The WTO system fosters scarcity of food and other vital commodities, and functions in the service of the market-rigging practices of the commodities cartels.

Plan of action

The following is a checklist of actions for the relief effort:

1. Designate nearby sources for shipping immediate food relief supplies; and carry out collaborative efforts among nations to continue food flows from other sources, to expand food output, and to build up reserves for food security and future food aid contingencies.

Japan's existing national food-security reserves (rice), can be tapped for the initial aid shipments—with provisions made to make good on re-stocking Japan's reserves. There are other stocks that can potentially be tapped to add to the relief flow needed over the coming weeks, from both elsewhere in Asia and the Pacific, including in Thailand and Australia, and also in the western United States and Canada.

The private, commercial grain "pipelines" run by Cargill, ADM, and the other grain cartel companies that dominate grain flows in North America and worldwide, and operate the storage and shipping in the Pacific grain ports of North America, can be commissioned to provide grain to North Korea. "Open the lid" on the cartel grain bins.

All other export-source food regions—the European Union, South America, etc., can come on line as sources for the flow of grains and other foods required, over the course of the emergency period. . . .

2. Identify the logistics required to deliver the food, and mobilize it. Storage and handling facilities, boats, fuels, trucks, tires, spare parts, motors and generators, mobile kitchens, whatever it takes, as is done for relief in natural weather or earthquake disasters. . . .

3. Mobilize agriculture and other aid to restore agricultural output potential in North Korea as soon as possible. Among the inputs required for this task, are such basics as fuel, earth-moving equipment, polyvinyl chloride pipes, valves, and other water system apparatus; and aid for food handling and storage equipment, transport aid, as well as farm inputs, etc.

4. Mobilize for *increased* output in agricultural regions around the world, including floor-prices for farmers, *not* rigged, free-trade prices, and, including provision of essential inputs—fertilizers, farm chemicals, quality seedstocks, etc.

Lift the restrictions on the amount of land area cultivated, and on making improvements in soils. Nullify all WTO/IMF and World Bank restrictions on farm sectors and food production.