# North Korean Food System.

## The History of the food system in North Korea.

Problems with food system started in the country followed by an economic crisis in the year 1994 to 1998. In this case, the famine was initiated by many various factors: loss of Soviet support and economic mismanagement (Haggard & Noland, 2007). The two factors affected food production and import. Also, a destructive flood and droughts were the order of the year, but the centrally paced system and the government of North Korea were not flexible enough to control the crisis at that time. The situation resulted in the deaths of so many people, whereby nearly 3,500,000 out of the 22 million people died from hunger illness and serious starvation. In this case, the situation was termed as Arduous March, which was described as fighting against many enemies. However, the government banned the use of such terms, since they thought that citizens were condemning their failures. In this case, any citizen who was found saying that the all the deaths that were experienced was because of starvation and famine were arrested (Haggard & Noland, 2007). It showed that they could not get any help from outside agencies since such organizations knew they were not experiencing any food insecurity.

Moreover, in regards to the spread of malnutrition in the region, there was the destruction of food reserves and harvest making many people desperate for food. In this case, it even reported that people who were living in well-off areas depended on maize cobs before crop production was fully developed. Based on this, the crisis affected everyone without considering social class or gender (Haggard & Noland, 2007).

## Food shortages, and starvation in North Korea.

Since then, North Korea has still been experiencing problems with its food system. To be specific nearly 17 percent of the whole population is in the state of famine and crisis emergency, and almost 22 % are living under stress when it comes to food situation. The situation makes the whole country to experience food shortage. There are various reasons behind the food shortages and starvation in the country: the country depends on Public Distribution System (Tara, 2016). In this case, a report released earlier this year categorized all the countries that are depending on Public Distribution System as experiencing food shortages and are undernutrition. Evidently, this is obtained from the fact that Public Distribution System of staple food and grains fluctuate periodically. The system makes the distribution of food unpredictable. Moreover, WFP claimed that the North Korean who majorly depends on PDS do not get the correct proportion of their food, that is if they are lucky to receive the food. Based on this, over the past years, Public Distribution system of food was noted to be marginal to be part of food supply (Tara, 2016). Therefore, the claim that over 10 million North Koreans are experiencing food insecurity and starvation since they depend on PDS is definitely, is at its best. However, that is not the only way to understand food shortages and starvation in North Korea; there is the problem with information and data on food security in that particular country.

In regards to the information and data on food security in North Korea, it incorporates the government of Korea in the process of data collection. That does not mean that the government of North Korea is demanding for food production to an upper level, the country is simply trying to exaggerate or overlaps it food need to get more help from the outside world (Bennett, Corporation & Richardson Foundation, 2013). However, the political nature of the market, economic system, and food place the country in a difficult situation since it cannot get trustworthy assessment regarding the food situation in the county. Also, the economy of North Korea itself. In this case, it is realized that food insecurity and famine does not erupt just from lack of food as perceived, but from different entitlements. Based on this, does resources exist and if they exist who gets them? In regards to North Korea, the government does want to implement important and overarching reforms of the economic systems. In other words, there are many changes that the government of North Korea can implement regarding their economy to enhance their access to food and reduce food insecurity but it is reluctant on those reforms. Lastly, the geographical landscape of the country makes it difficult to cultivate crops. In this case, there is a challenge in producing enough food for the whole country, since most parts in the region are mountainous leaving only 17 % of and cultivable (Bennett, Corporation & Richardson Foundation, 2013).

## North Korea's politics interfering with their agriculture policies

Moreover, over the past years, the North Korean political Prestige has not been in line with the Agricultural policies and reforms. In this case, the government seems to have turned the agricultural policies and reforms into an individual project or rather prestige project making derailment in agricultural progress. For example, Lanʹkov (2013), published that there is a contradiction regarding the food supply in North Korea. Based on this, the government of North Korea is providing information regarding their success in agricultural reforms, while in real sense Food and Agricultural organization are showing that the situation is not right. The organization noted that there was drought, showing crop failures and requested for food aid (Lanʹkov, 2013). The food organization further noted that large population would be affected if they are not helped. In this case, the government is blocking further help from outside by claiming success in their agriculture. The idea also goes against the agricultural policies that require the country should seek help in times of starvation.

Moreover, FAO reported earlier that the cereal forecast for the season 2015 had reduced due to long dry spell. Also, it noted that the rain that hit the country in July and August resulted in serious flooding the in the northern regions (Lanʹkov, 2013). The flooding swept away some of the planted areas. In this case, the forecast for 2015 is recorded to be below that of last year by 12 percent. However, based on all these shortages and decline the government of North Korea is still spreading the propaganda that they are not experiencing any downfall in food (Lanʹkov, 2013). They even went ahead and held a party in South Hwanghae to rejoice and celebrate the enhancement of that particular region in regards to food security. In regards to this, there is a huge impact on the agricultural reforms in that people in the ground level do not have any say regarding the development and opinions for the betterment of the agricultural policies. Also, once the highly ranked people (top government officials) have reached on a decision, then it cannot be challenged. The strategy actually, interferes with the reforms that were earlier placed, since they cannot be implemented. Therefore, the food imports in the country have reduced because there was a propaganda prayed by the country politicians that their condition has improved Agricultural wise.

Another way the North Korean’s politics is interfering with the agricultural policies, is by making those policies and reforms to be part of their prestige project. For example, it is noted that there are some problems with the implementation of the reforms. It is because they are not given the correct channel to be implemented well by most people on the ground. In this case, the policies divert their function and assume other roles, whereby they are not performing their roles as intended (Lanʹkov, 2013). The strategy is showing that agricultural policies are a project of the president and the top officials since the same policies are being sanctioned. In other words, if a top government official demand for something to be done, then it should be done regardless of risks involved.

In regards to the international food help that the people of North Korea help, is less. The government is claiming to be distributing their food effectively, while in a real sense they are doing the opposite. Based on this, there has been a continuous war between the aid agencies and the North Koreans to enhance the degree of monitoring (Haggard & Noland, 2017). The international agencies have been cutting links with the people of North Korea because they usually divert the aid food to other people, which is against the policies of the agencies and agricultural sectors. In this case, the needy people and refugees rarely get food aid. For example, if the help is supposed to go to its intended person: food delivered to the orphan, widow or even pregnant woman, but is diverted to other people who actually, pay for it. Furthermore, the food situation has worsened by the currency reform, and distribution of food the military instead of the refugees.

Also, North Koreans are receiving little food help to only specific regions in the country. For example, United State made reforms on how to distribute food aid in the region to eliminate the uncertainty of food reaching the intended recipient (Haggard & Noland, 2017). In this case, the World Food Program went into ports in the Northeast. In as much as they believed that the intended person would not get it free, but at least food supply will increase only in this particular worst-affected area. Based on this, the remaining part of the country will continue suffering since World Food Program assumes they are not badly affected. Lastly, the country receives non-preferred food help like Millet and barley from UN, rather than their favorite food rice because of the uncertainty in monitoring.

## Food that North Korea's wealthy and elite eat, and how it differs from the food that the regular poor people eat.

According to United States (2016), the food system in North Korea is biased. In this case, many poor people go hungry or are lacking necessary nutrients like proteins, carbohydrates, and fats, while on the other hand, a given section (government officials and wealthy people) is overeating. Therefore, the strategy is a bad way of dealing with hunger since it will call for expanding the population of the world who are already exploiting the available natural resources specifically when climate changes. Also, the situation in cities and rural areas contribute to unbalanced diet in North Korea. The two regions are different. For example, the rural areas cover western and eastern coastal lowlands. It incorporates the Yang gang and Chagang provinces, which are sparsely populated since they lack cultivable land and the cold climate makes it worse. In this case, they are not able to produce food for their consumption. On the other hand, the urban population is majorly associated with transportation and natural resources. Based, on this most of the people have moved to the urban centers since those are the only places they can get money to buy food. The rural region has been deserted leaving few people who cannot make use of the available land to produce food (the United States, 2016). In regards to this, most of the poor people in North Korea are focusing on making money and eating junk food without considering rural areas that can produce healthier food. They end up having malnutrition because they continuously depend on specifics types of food hence missing important nutrients.

In regards to malnutrition in North Korea, many children in North Korea are not receiving enough medicine, food or even general healthcare they require for their mental or physical development leaving many of them malnourished. In this case, many children in rural areas are experiencing rapid diarrhea because of lack of clean water and even sanitation. However, that is not the case in major towns like Pyongyang, whereby children even attend state functions to have a good taste of food (the United States, 2016). These are children who come from rich family and do not depend on millets, rice, and barley like the less fortunate. They eat meat, healthy vegetables, and all kinds of carbohydrates e.t.c. It is the reason why, visitors are not allowed to have access to the rural areas, but they are retained in such cities to assume that the country is well off regarding food security. Instead of the government spending on the food situation in the country, is busy creating its military, coming up with nuclear programs. In this case, the military people are the ones who are given the best medical care and healthy food, while the remaining rural population is neglected. Furthermore, the people of North Korea cannot produce enough food to sustain 24 million people. Hence they are forced to rely on government and UN donations. However, the ratios in the donations mainly incorporate maize, barley, and rice. Based on this, many children are raised without having proteins in their body, hence interfering with their learning capabilities.

## Conclusion

North Korea is the type of country that started experiencing problems with its food system by 1990s. For example, Problems with food system started in the country followed by an economic crisis in the year 1994 to 1998. In this case, the famine was initiated by many various factors: loss of Soviet support and economic mismanagement. Furthermore, the situation is still experienced today in the country. In this case, the reason for continuous starvation and hunger is because of poor public distribution systems, the inability of the government to implement necessary reforms to boost the economy of the country (Haggard & Noland, 2017). Furthermore, there is the government propaganda and politics which are hindering provision of food help. Lastly, less fortunate groups are neglected from and are not given the correct balanced diet their counterparts who are from the rich family. It is because the poor live in rural areas, which do not have favorable conditions for cultivation while the rich live in the city. Here the government are biased, they only provide people living in a city with the best food and healthcare services, and divert the food intended for the refugees and less fortunate to the military men.

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