

Sustainable Reforestation in the DPR Korea - International Cooperation for the Benefit of People and Nature

Office Seoul



Bare and eroded mountain slopes and hills are characteristic for the landscape of North Korea. They display the hardship of the rural population and a humanitarian disaster in the 1990s. HSF Korea supports sustainable reforestation with a focus on capacity-building.

CHALLENGES

The fall of the Iron Curtain had a major impact on the Korean Peninsula. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea (North Korea) had been dependent on the support of the Soviet Union since the Korean War and the subsequent di- vision of the peninsula into South and North. After the support by the Soviet Union had ceased, according to current estimates between two hundred thousand and two million people died during the so-called „Arduous March” in North Korea - a famine striking the country between 1994 and 1998. One of the reasons was the collapse of the state allocation system, due to a lack of food and energy supplies and an ailing centrally administered economy.

Some of the effects of this disaster are still evident through- out the country. Bare mountain slopes indicate the lack of food and energy of the population. Between 1990 and 2015, almost 40% of the country's forest area disappeared (World Bank, 2017). Reasons were the use of wood as fuel, as well as the cultivation of agricultural land on hills and mountains - which lead to severe erosion and food security risks. Not only the poverty of the local population, but also administrative mismanagement, the lack of expertise of decision-makers, and a lack of scientific exchanges led to this environmental catastrophe, occurring simultaneously with the humanitarian disaster. The reasons for the dramatic development of the forest sector in North Korea were, besides the lack of food and energy, the lack of awareness for the significance of healthy forests



Image of a North Korean village – deforestation of slopes for agriculture cultivation lead to erosion and reduced flood protection.

and trees and resulting governance deficits. This gradually changed in the last view years and the understanding for environment issues increased. Thus, reforestation has been declared a state goal. The country's forests are more and more perceived as a natural protection against floods, crop loss, and famine. In addition, people begin to realize that especially in the environmental sector an international exchange is urgently required – as this is the only way to profit from the global experiences in the forestry sector. However, due to decades of isolation, North Korea is still cut off from the experience of modern and sustainable forestry expertise in other countries.



The use of modern technology has changed the way in which forest inventories have been implemented in recent years.



German experts support the reforestation in the DPR Korea.

APPROACHES

The Hanns Seidel Foundation (HSF) is trying to support this change through various pilot projects. A project on sustainable reforestation funded by the European Union has been implemented until 2018. The goal is the reintegration of North Korea into international networks and an increasing exchange with international organizations. Numerous trainings, seminars and workshops, but also trainings of young students from North Korea at German universities have the aim to use the topic of forestry as a platform for international cooperation. This cooperation shall contribute to the modernization of the forestry sector on an institutional and professional level, and create benefits for a healthy environment and the livelihood of the rural population in North Korea. In the next few years, new

One of the main goals of the joint forestry project is to strengthen international cooperation and to provide researchers and experts from the DPR Korea with access to modern methods in the forestry sector.

Pang Un Gyong, Project assistant at the Forest Management Research Institute

pilot projects will be set up and further cooperation projects will be initiated. Additionally, HSF Korea supports efforts to establish the National Forest Inventory by modern standards in North Korea through seminars and trainings.

IMPACT

The professional cooperation with its partners, the FMRI (Forest Management Research Institute) and the MoLEP (Ministry of Land and Environment Protection), is reliable, constructive, and the existing framework for further projects. Above all, however, the exchange of experiences with German forestry experts and trainings in Mongolia and China led to an international exchange of experience and increased the efficiency of the forest management in North Korea. ■

OUR MAIN PARTNERS



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