

## **DPRK COAL BRIQUET EXPORT PRICES JUMP THIS YEAR**

North Korea, in keeping with rising international coal prices, appears to have hiked up the export price of heating briquettes twice in the last three months. A North Korea insider in Shenyang, China recently reported, “North Korea’s Trade Bureau Price Control Division raised export prices at least twice as this month came around, so the export price soared up to 50 USD per ton,” and, “As the rising international coal price trend continues, there is a high probability that North Korean heating briquette prices will also rise further.”

Last year, North Korean heating briquettes were exported at 30 USD per ton, but as 2008 rolled around and international prices suddenly shot up, DPRK coal prices rose by over 50 percent, putting a significant burden on Chinese importers. However, Chinese importers still prefer DPRK briquettes as shipping costs from alternatives such as Vietnam or Indonesia still make North Korean imports relatively inexpensive.

It has been reported that the DPRK Trade Bureau has approved the export of briquettes to China at below-official prices of 44~45 USD per ton in cases in which there is Chinese capital or equipment has been invested in the coal mine. These charcoal briquettes are North Korea’s largest export item, with China importing 170 million USD-worth in 2007 alone.