North Korean Farm (from BBC)

Like most people, I knew that North Korea was short on food. What I didn't realize is that this is largely due to environmental degradation. According to a 2004 U.N. report,"Major crop yields fell by almost two thirds during the 1990s due to land degradation caused by loss of forest, droughts, floods and tidal waves, acidification due to over-use of chemicals, as well as shortages of fertiliser, farm machinery and oil."

Strangely, despite its general pariah/rogue statute, the North Korean government cooperated in the writing of this U.N. report. It has also signed international agreements such as the Convention on Biological Diversity.

Some older readers may remember the "ping pong diplomacy" that opened doors between the U.S. and China a generation ago. Could cooperation on environmental issues offer a way of beginning a thaw with North Korea? Seems like a long-shot, but might be worth a try for want of better options.