

Statistics Division

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$$\pi_n = \left(\frac{y_n^k}{y_n} \right) \left(\frac{p_n^k}{p^k} \right)$$



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Food deprivation trends:

Mid-term review of progress towards the World Food Summit target

SUMMARY

Ten years after the World Food Summit (WFS) and less than 10 years before 2015 (the target year for halving the number of undernourished), the hunger situation in the Developing World still remains of great concern. The number of undernourished has not changed significantly between 1990-92 (the bench-mark period for the WFS target) and 2001-03: over 800 million people in the world are still hungry.

But yet, efforts made towards hunger reduction need to be recognized despite the stagnated trend in number of undernourished. The proportion of undernourished people decreased from 20 to 17% between 1990-92 and 2001-03 in the Developing World. Also it decreased in Countries in Transition, particularly in recent years.

The trends in hunger reduction have been different throughout the reporting period. The stagnation in number of undernourished in the Developing World hides a change in trend from an increase to a decrease between 1993-95 and 1997-99 and a slight increase from 1997-99 to 2001-03. In order to reduce the number of undernourished to 400 million, in the Developing World, countries should maintain a constant 4% yearly rate of decrease from 2001-03 to 2015, which is far from the current level. The same yearly rate of decrease is required for Countries in Transition.

Sub-regions show wide disparities not only in terms of hunger situation but also in progress made in fighting against hunger. Some sub-regions have succeeded better than others in reducing hunger since the WFS bench-mark period of 1990-92. And effort to reach WFS target is not the same for all sub regions. The required constant yearly rate of decrease would range from 2.8% for South America to 5.8% for Central Africa to reach WFS target.

These overall trends hide progress achieved at individual country level – it should be noted that around one-half of countries have reduced undernourishment.

Introduction

In 1996, 180 nations met at FAO headquarters for the World Food Summit (WFS) to discuss ways to end hunger. Nations pledged to eradicate hunger and committed themselves to a basic target: reducing the number of undernourished people by half by 2015, setting as a bench-mark the 1990-92 period. Half way towards the target it is time to analyse changes in number of undernourished and to examine how the hunger situation has evolved. The analysis of food deprivation trends, in the context of the WFS target, cannot be restricted to the sole analysis of changes over time in number of food deprived and must be also extended to the changes in proportion of undernourished people. The Millennium Development Goal (MDG) on hunger reduction, adopted in 2000, set a target to halve, between 1990-92 and 2015, the **proportion** of people who suffer from hunger. It might be then the case that the population growth was such that the hunger reduction leads to a progress in terms of reaching the MDG target but a set back in terms of reaching the WFS target. In this respect understanding trends in food deprivation and progress towards achievement of the WFS goal are analysed using both, proportion of food deprivation and number of food deprived for the Developing World and Countries in Transition¹.

Trends in food deprivation observed in the Developing World (DW) evidence this contradiction. Hunger reduction has been significant from 1990-92 to 2001-03 as measured by the proportion of undernourished. It has decreased from 20 to 17%, while the number of undernourished practically has not decreased (from 823 to 820 millions), making the WFS target of halving the number of hungry people by 2015 less realistic. With less than ten years remaining from now to 2015, the hunger situation in the DW is still of great concern, the number of undernourished persons is still over 800 millions of people as it was at the WFS bench-mark period of 1990-92. The hunger situation in Countries in Transition is also a concern. Both the number and proportion of undernourished people have increased from 1993-95 to 2001-03.

The stagnation in number of undernourished in the DW also does not reflect changes in trends over time, from an increase between 1990-92 to 1993-95 to a decrease between 1993-95 and 1997-99, which reverted again to a slight increase from 1997-99 to 2001-03. This last increasing trend in number is a concern since it will be only by maintaining at least a 4 percent

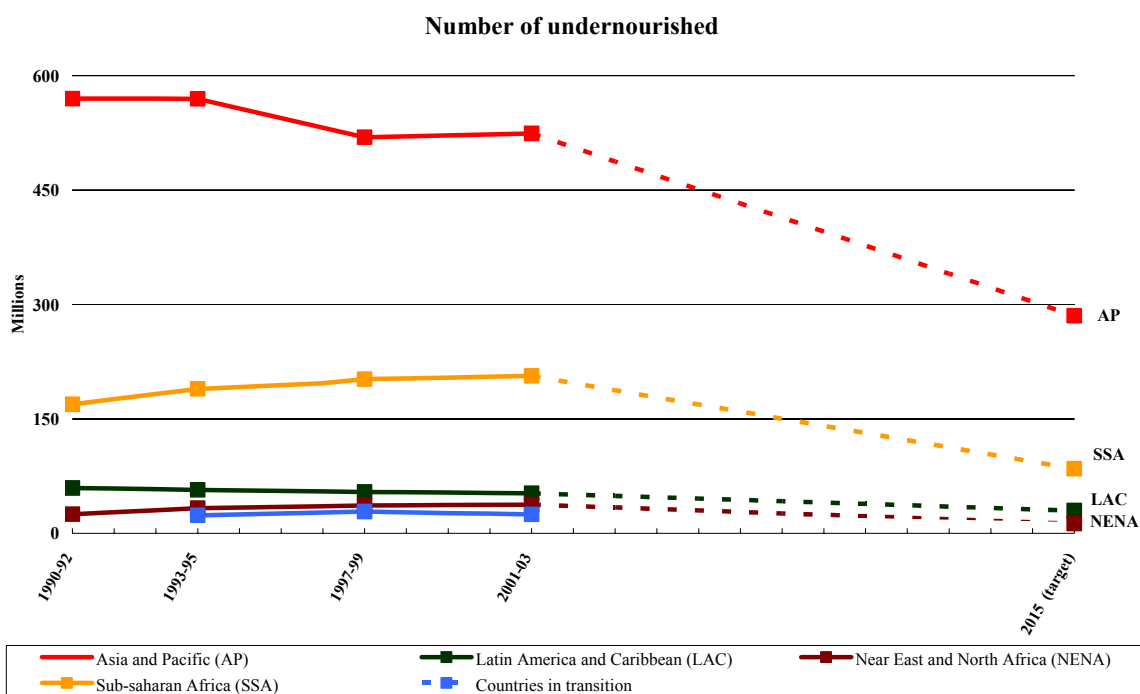
¹. Countries in transition are monitored separately due to the late starting date for the bench mark period (1993-95 instead of 1990-92) as estimates of the prevalence of undernourishment were not available prior to 1993.

annual rate of decrease from 2001-03 onwards, that the number of undernourished will halve by 2015.

Worldwide and regional trends

Short term trends of food deprivation in the DW and in Countries in Transition during the last decade are shown in Graphs 1 and 2 depict, respectively, number and proportion of undernourished for the four three-year periods of 1990-92, 1993-95, 1997-99 and 2001-03 as well as target values set by the WFS and the MDG. The prevalence of undernourishment by region, sub-regions and countries are shown in Table 1 in Annex.

Graph 1. Undernourishment and WFS targets by regions

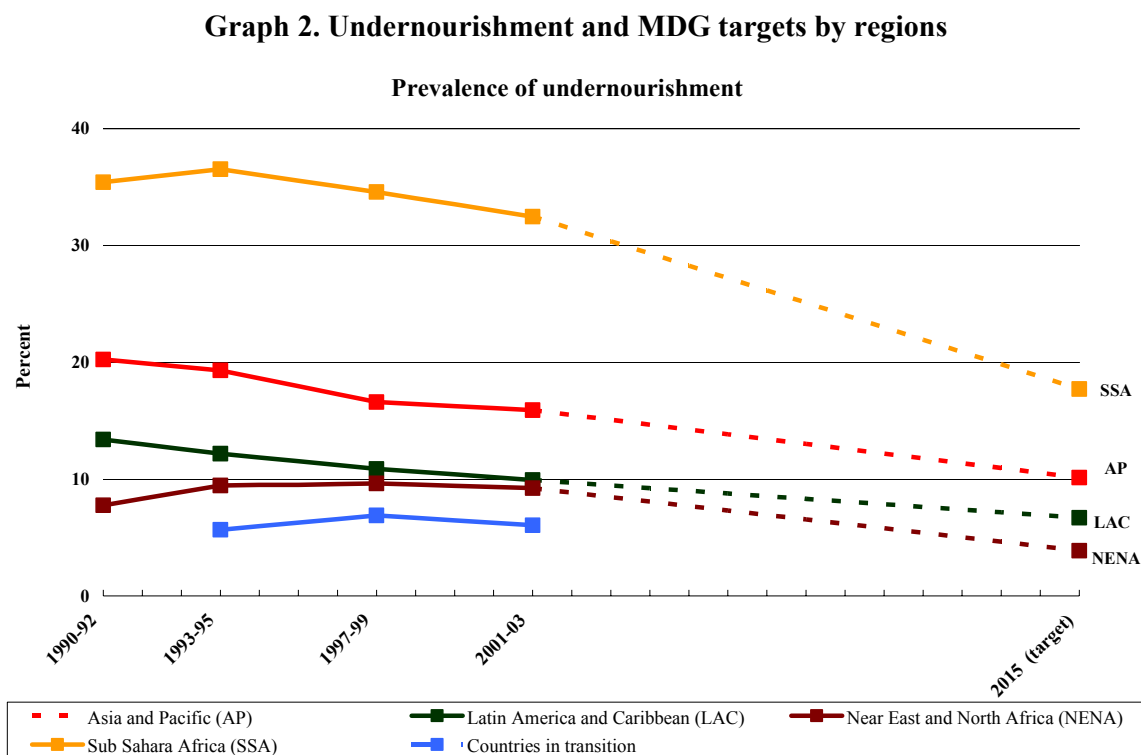


The regional, sub-regional and country trends are analysed under the assumption that the WFS and MDG targets to halve number and proportion of hungry people by 2015 can be also applied at these levels.

Overall, during the reporting period from 1990-92 to 2001-03, the DW did not experience real change in number of undernourished; moreover, disparities on hunger reduction trends among regions were wide and efforts to fight hunger were also unequal during the 1990's. The region of Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) experienced a stable decreasing trend since 1990-92. In the region of Asia and Pacific (AP) the increasing trend from 1990-92 to 1993-95

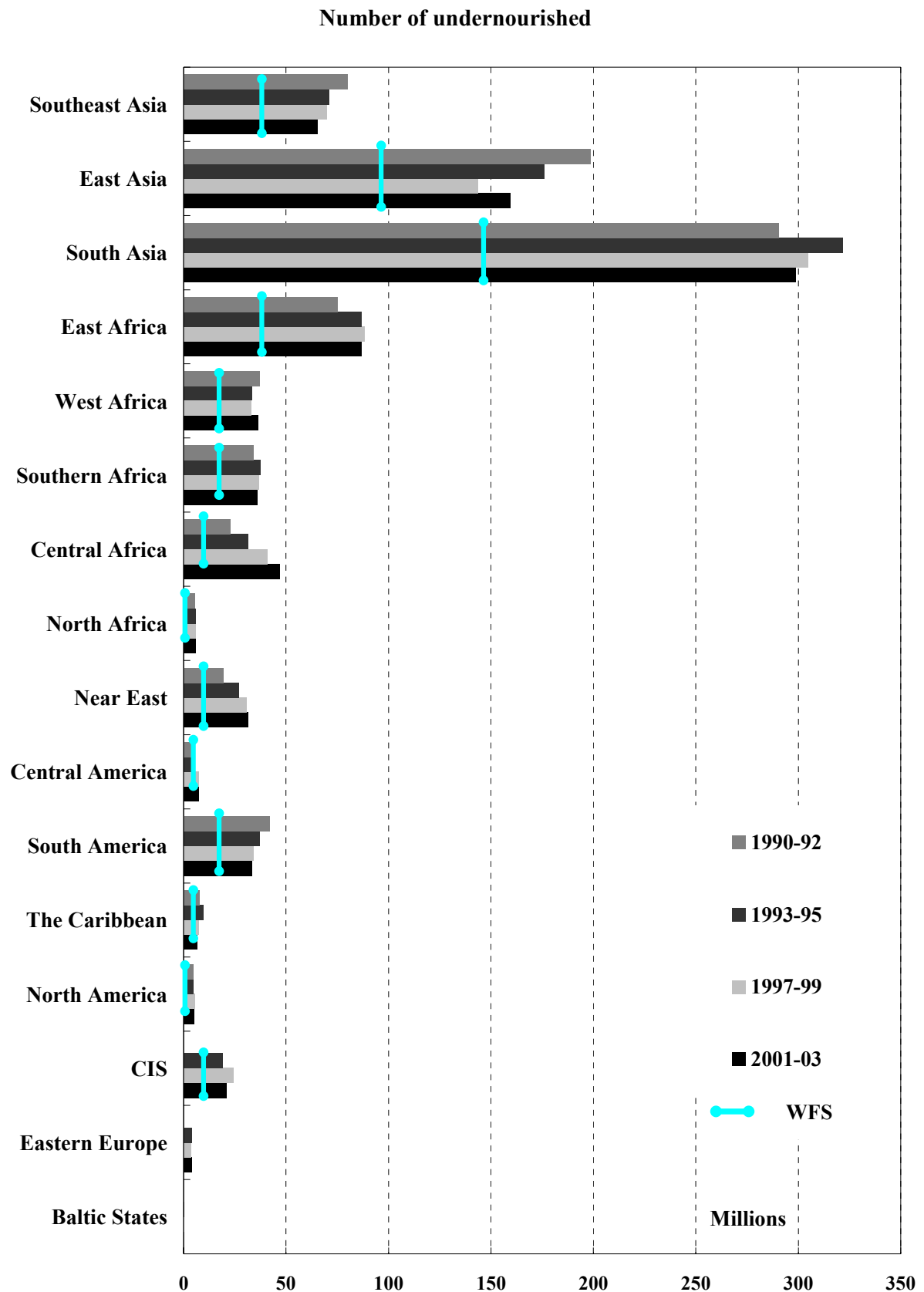
reverted to a decreasing trend from 1993-95 to 1997-1999 to turn again to a slight increase from 1997-99 to 2001-03. After the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, hunger increased in Countries in Transition particularly from 1993-95 to 1997-99, but it slightly decreased thereafter. In the regions of Near East and North Africa (NENA) and Sub Sahara Africa (SSA) the number of people undernourished increased throughout the decade.

As around two thirds of undernourished people in the DW are located in AP and more than one fourth in SSA, the evolution of hunger in these two regions is crucial for the overall situation in the DW, and so far the most recent increasing trends in number of undernourished observed in those regions are in opposite direction to that expected to meet the WFS target.

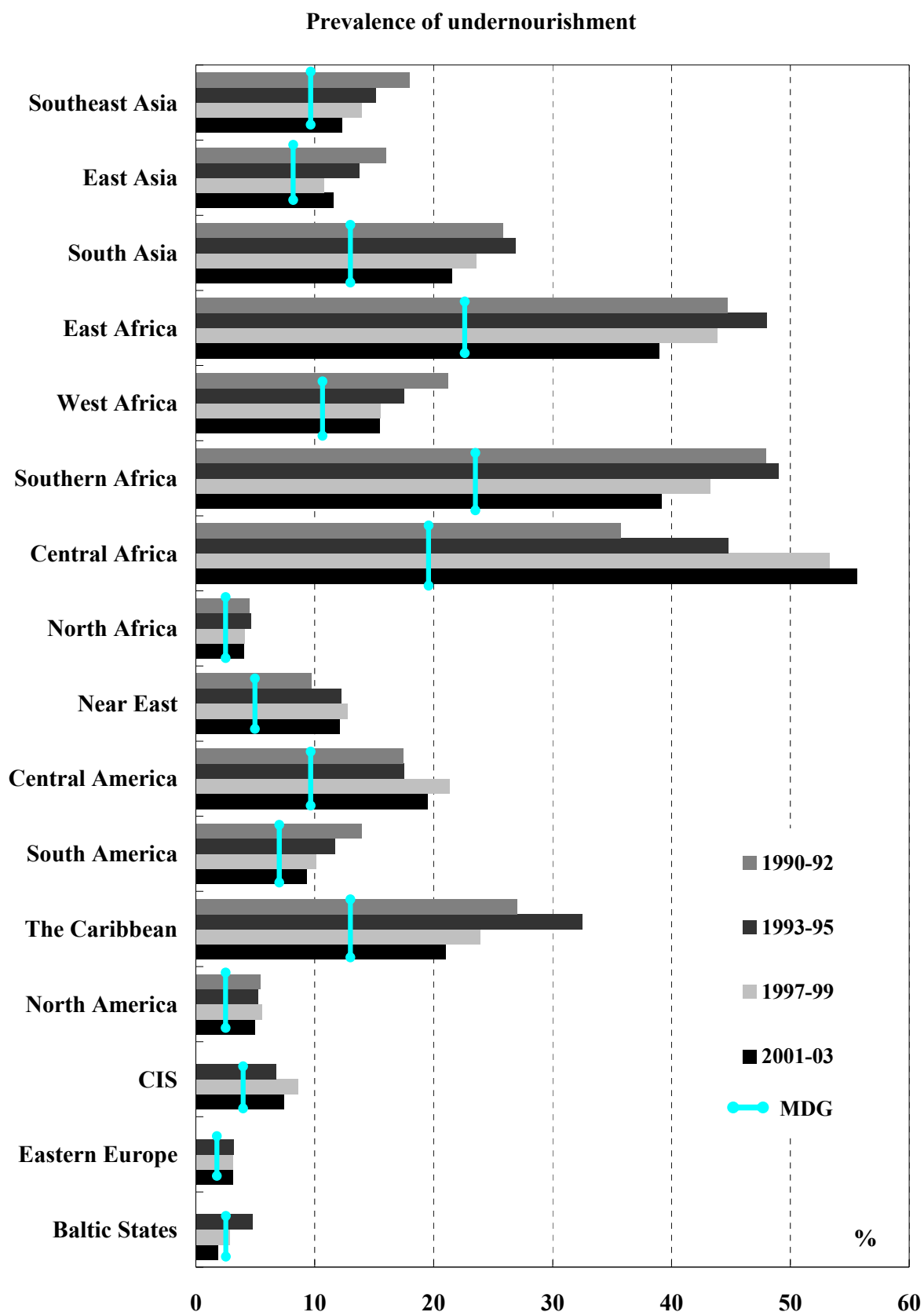


The good news is that SSA, despite the increasing trend in number of undernourished, experienced a decrease in prevalence of undernourishment, in particular from 1993-95 to 2001-03 (see Graph 2). Also, the prevalence of undernourishment decreased in all regions except Near East and North Africa (NENA). Regions of AP, LAC and SSA have contributed to the overall decrease in prevalence in the DW. The prevalence of undernourishment has declined faster in SSA than in AP and steadily in LAC. In Countries in Transition the prevalence of undernourishment also decreased from 1997-99 to 2001-03.

Graph 3. Undernourishment and WFS targets by sub-regions



Graph 4. Undernourishment and MDG targets by sub-regions



Graphs 3 and 4 describe number and proportion of food deprived, respectively, by sub-regions for the same four periods. Changes over time in all regions hide changes observed among sub-regions. For instance, decreasing trends in Southern Africa and East Africa are masked by increasing trends in other sub-regions of SSA such as Central Africa and West Africa. In the same vein, hunger reduction in AP hides a worsening situation in East Asia where the number of undernourished people has increased recently after a reduction experienced in early 1990's. The same with Near East in NENA where the situation remains of great concern as number of undernourished has been constantly increasing.

To summarize, Southeast Asia, South America and the Baltic States are the only three sub-regions that have experienced both a decrease in number and proportion of undernourished while in Central Africa, Near East and Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) countries the situation has worsened throughout the decade. All other sub-regions succeeded in preventing hunger increase between the bench-mark and most recent periods, which is shown more in proportion than in number. Of course, success in reducing number of undernourished in the DW lies widely on the ability of South Asia to maintain the decreasing trend observed since the middle of the 1990's and East Asia to turn around a increasing trend observed in recent years as these two sub-regions comprise more than 57 % of the population of the DW.

Progress towards the WFS target

Progress towards the WFS target as measured by the relative change (average annual rate of change) for three different observed periods and the change required to reach WFS (from 2001-03 to 2015) are shown in Graph 5 by sub-regions.

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