



## The State of Food Insecurity in the World



**Meeting the 2015  
international hunger targets:  
taking stock of uneven progress**

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## Key messages



- About 795 million people are undernourished globally, down 167 million over the last decade, and 216 million less than in 1990–92. The decline is more pronounced in developing regions, despite significant population growth. In recent years, progress has been hindered by slower and less inclusive economic growth as well as political instability in some developing regions, such as Central Africa and western Asia.
- The year 2015 marks the end of the monitoring period for the Millennium Development Goal targets. For the developing regions as a whole, the share of undernourished people in the total population has decreased from 23.3 percent in 1990–92 to 12.9 per cent. Some regions, such as Latin America, the east and south-eastern regions of Asia, the Caucasus and Central Asia, and the northern and western regions of Africa have made fast progress. Progress was also recorded in southern Asia, Oceania, the Caribbean and southern and eastern Africa, but at too slow a pace to reach the MDG 1c target of halving the proportion of the chronically undernourished.
- A total of 72 developing countries out of 129, or more than half the countries monitored, have reached the MDG 1c hunger target. Most enjoyed stable political conditions and economic growth, often accompanied by social protection policies targeted at vulnerable population groups.
- For the developing regions as a whole, the two indicators of MDG 1c – the prevalence of undernourishment and the proportion of underweight children under 5 years of age – have both declined. In some regions, including western Africa, south-eastern Asia and South America, undernourishment declined faster than the rate for child underweight, suggesting room for improving the quality of diets, hygiene conditions and access to clean water, particularly for poorer population groups.
- Economic growth is a key success factor for reducing undernourishment, but it has to be inclusive and provide opportunities for improving the livelihoods of the poor. Enhancing the productivity and incomes of smallholder family farmers is key to progress.
- Social protection systems have been critical in fostering progress towards the MDG 1 hunger and poverty targets in a number of developing countries. Social protection directly contributes to the reduction of poverty, hunger and malnutrition by promoting income security and access to better nutrition, health care and education. By improving human capacities and mitigating the impacts of shocks, social protection fosters the ability of the poor to participate in growth through better access to employment.
- In many countries that have failed to reach the international hunger targets, natural and human-induced disasters or political instability have resulted in protracted crises with increased vulnerability and food insecurity of large parts of the population. In such contexts, measures to protect vulnerable population groups and improve livelihoods have been difficult to implement or ineffective.



2015

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FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS

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This year's annual *State of Food Insecurity in the World* report takes stock of progress made towards achieving the internationally established hunger targets, and reflects on what needs to be done, as we transition to the new post-2015 Sustainable Development Agenda.

United Nations member states have made two major commitments to tackle world hunger. The first was at the World Food Summit (WFS), in Rome in 1996, when 182 governments committed "... to eradicate hunger in all countries, with an immediate view to reducing the number of undernourished people to half their present level no later than 2015". The second was the formulation of the First Millennium Development Goal (MDG 1), established in 2000 by the United Nations members, which includes among its targets "cutting by half the proportion of people who suffer from hunger by 2015".

In this report, we review progress made since 1990 for every country and region as well as for the world as a whole. First, the good news: overall, the commitment to halve the percentage of hungry people, that is, to reach the MDG 1c target, has been almost met at the global level. More importantly, 72 of the 129 countries monitored for progress have reached the MDG target, 29 of which have also reached the more ambitious WFS goal by at least halving the number of undernourished people in their populations.

Marked differences in progress occur not only among individual countries, but also across regions and subregions. The prevalence of hunger has been reduced rapidly in Central, Eastern and South-Eastern Asia as well as in Latin America; in Northern Africa, a low level has been maintained throughout the MDG and WFS monitoring periods. Other regions, including the Caribbean, Oceania and Western Asia, saw some overall progress, but at a slower pace. In two regions, Southern Asia and sub-Saharan Africa, progress has been slow overall, despite many success stories at country and subregional levels. In many countries that have achieved modest progress, factors such as war, civil unrest and the displacement of refugees have often frustrated efforts to reduce hunger, sometimes even raising the ranks of the hungry.

Progress towards the MDG 1c target, however, is assessed not only by measuring undernourishment, or hunger, but also by a second indicator – the prevalence of underweight children under five years of age. Progress for the two indicators was similar, but slightly faster in the case of undernourishment. While both indicators have moved in parallel for the world as a whole, they diverge significantly at the regional level owing to the different determinants of child underweight.

Overall progress notwithstanding, hunger remains an everyday challenge for almost 795 million people worldwide, including 780 million in the developing regions. Hence, hunger eradication should remain a key commitment of decision-makers at all levels.

In this year's *State of Food Insecurity of the World*, we not only estimate the progress already achieved, but also identify remaining problems, and offer recommendations for how these can be addressed. In a nutshell, there is no "one-size-fits-all" solution. Interventions must be tailored to conditions, including food availability and access, as well as longer-term development prospects. Approaches need to be appropriate and comprehensive, with the requisite political commitment

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