

Zero hunger

2 End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition, and promote sustainable agriculture

Undernourishment declined globally from 19 percent to 11 percent in the past quarter century, while child stunting fell from 40 percent to 23 percent. But populations and food demand continue to grow, especially in South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa. Ending hunger and all forms of malnutrition by 2030 requires faster downward trends. Goal 2 also addresses poverty and food insecurity through enhancing agricultural productivity and sustainability.

Ending hunger and malnutrition

An end to hunger is an end to chronic undernourishment, the state of not acquiring enough food to meet the daily minimum dietary energy requirements over a year. The prevalence of undernourishment declined by 8 percentage points between 1991 and 2015 globally, leaving 793 million people currently affected (see figure 2d on page 10).

Over a third of all undernourished people live in South Asia, while Sub-Saharan Africa and East Asia and Pacific each account for around a quarter (see figure 2c on page 10). All these regions have seen fairly steady declines in the prevalence of undernourishment since 1990. Continuing progress is not assured, however: the Middle East and North Africa has stagnated in recent years, if at the relatively low level of 8.2 percent. Ending hunger by 2030 requires accelerated efforts to achieve faster global declines (target 2.1).

Malnutrition refers to both undernutrition and overnutrition. Goal 2 aims to end “all forms of malnutrition” by 2030 (target 2.2). It encompasses the World Health Assembly (WHA) 2025 targets of a 40 percent reduction in the number of children under-five who are stunted (too short for age), no increase in childhood overweight (too heavy for height), a 50 percent reduction of anemia in women of reproductive age, and increasing the rate of exclusive breastfeeding in the first six months to at least 50 percent.

Reducing stunting

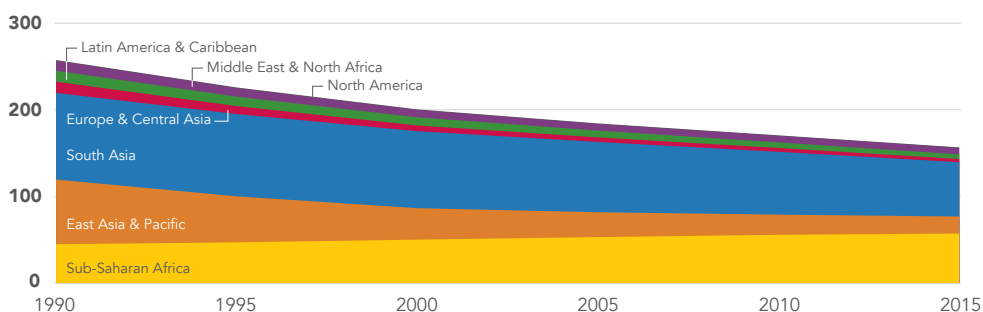
The number of stunted children has declined steadily since 1990, and many countries are on course to meet the target of reducing stunting by 2025.¹ But the absolute number of stunted children increased in Sub-Saharan Africa from nearly 45 million in 1990 to 57 million in 2015, and the region will not meet the WHA target of reducing the number by 40 percent if the current trend is not reversed (figure 2a). Moreover, the East Asia and Pacific downward trend is driven largely by reductions in China; Indonesia and the Philippines require accelerated progress to reach the 2025 target.

Aggregate trends mask inequalities in child malnutrition among the rich and the poor. Evidence from 80 countries from 1990 to 2011 shows persistent inequalities in child undernutrition, particularly stunting, with countries showing little or no progress toward bridging the gap between the wealthy and the poor.²

Among 10 countries with the highest child stunting prevalence in 2010–15, many exhibit a wide gap between the poorest and the richest quintile of the population (figure 2b). This gap is the widest in three lower-middle-income countries, Lao PDR (a gap of 41 percentage points), Pakistan (39), and Yemen (33). The gap in other high-prevalence countries ranges from 12 percentage points (Benin) to 29 (Burundi). Cameroon, Nepal, Nigeria, and Peru also have wide gaps in child stunting prevalence by wealth quintile, though their average prevalences are not as high.

2a Child stunting is steadily declining in most regions but increasing in Sub-Saharan Africa

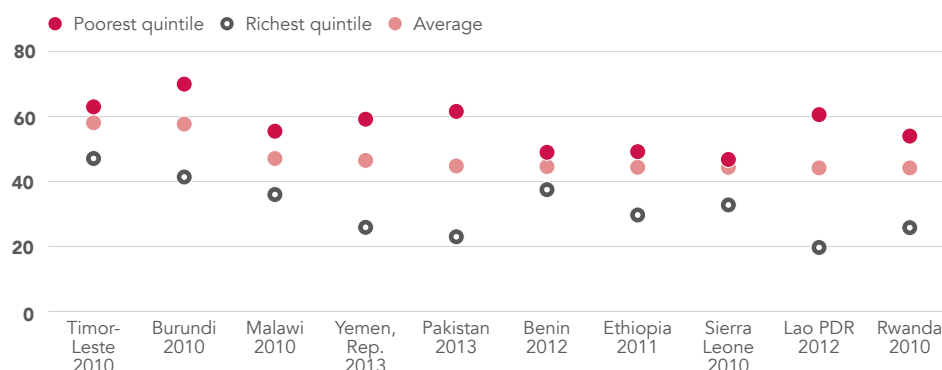
Number of children under age 5 that are stunted, height for age (millions)



Source: United Nations Children's Fund, World Health Organization, and World Bank, 2016, *Levels and Trends in Child Malnutrition*, New York; WDI (SH.STA.STNT.ZS).

2b Child stunting can vary as much within countries as between countries

Share of children under 5 that are stunted, height for age (%)



Source: World Bank Health, Nutrition, and Population Statistics database (SH.STA.STNT.Q1.ZS, SH.STA.STNT.Q5.ZS, SH.STA.STNT.QT.ZS).

Enhancing agricultural productivity and food security

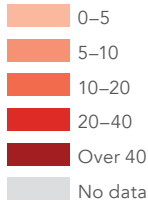
The prevalence of undernourishment provides only a partial picture of the food security situation. To contribute to a more comprehensive assessment of the multiple dimensions and manifestations of food insecurity and to better inform policy responses, the Food and Agriculture Organization has compiled a preliminary set of food security indicators, available for most countries and years. One such indicator is the depth of food deficit, measured as the amount of calories needed to lift the undernourished from their current status, everything else being constant.

The depth of food deficit has declined the fastest in East Asia and Pacific and Latin America and the Caribbean, but persists at relatively high levels in Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia. Globally, the depth of food deficit is about half of what it was 20 years ago (figure 2e). Continuing population growth and rising food demand coupled with the projected negative impacts of climate change on agriculture in the most vulnerable countries add to the challenge of sustaining and accelerating progress across all regions.³

The populations of both Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia are increasing faster than elsewhere (figure 2f). Projected rises in those two regions over the next 15 years will together

2c Undernourishment is most widespread in Sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia, and East Asia and Pacific

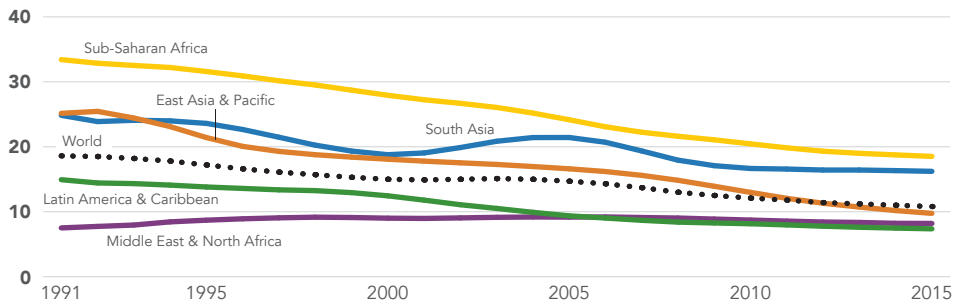
Prevalence of undernourishment, 2015 (% of population)



Source: Food and Agriculture Organization; WDI (SN.ITK.DEFC.ZS).

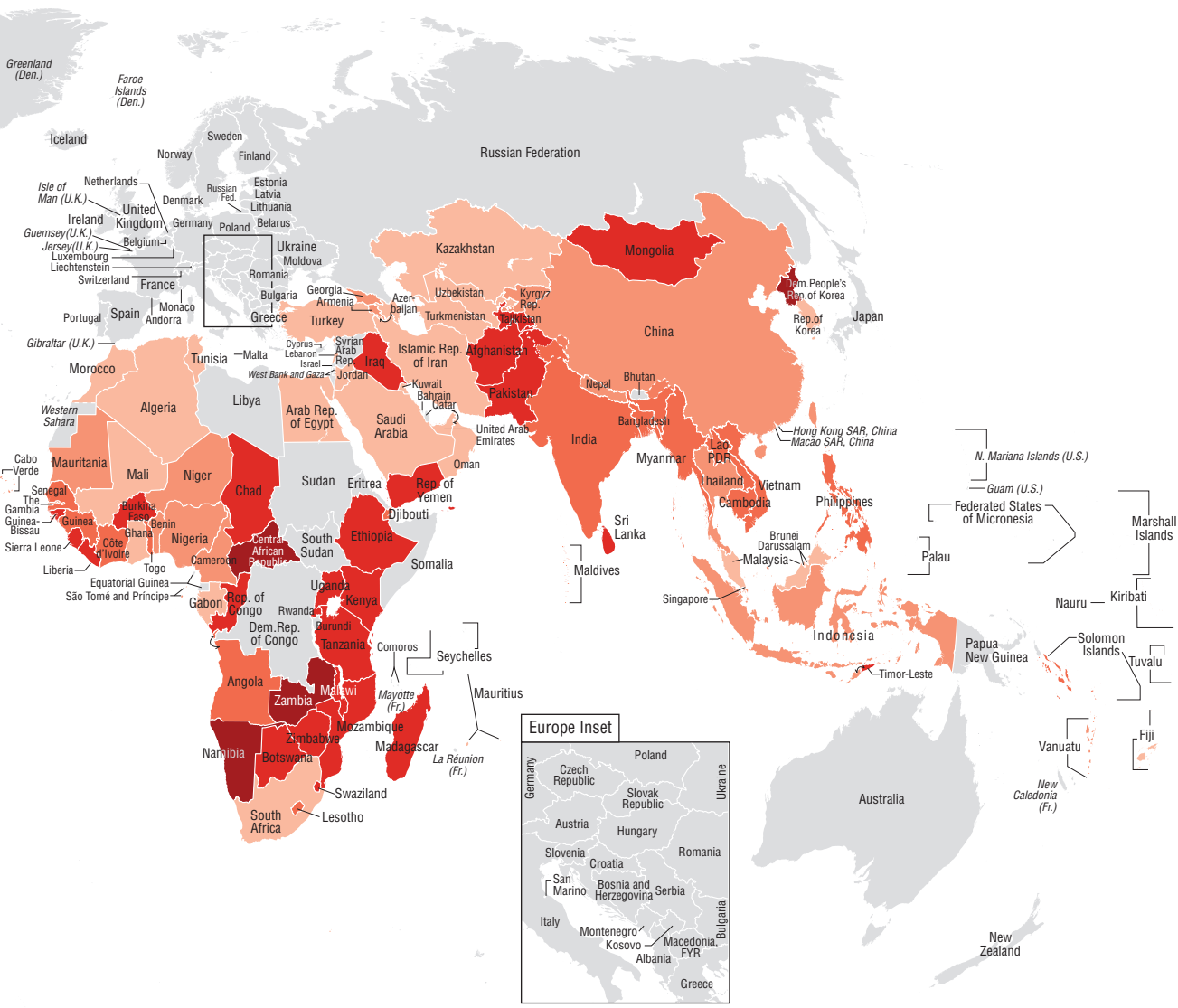
2d Undernourishment, declining in almost every region, remains highest in Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia

Prevalence of undernourishment (% of population)



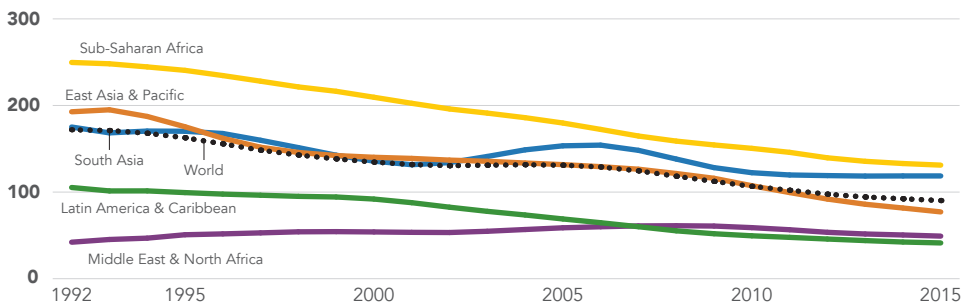
Note: Data refer to the middle year of three-year intervals. For example, data for 2005 are estimates for 2004–06. Data are not available for Europe and Central Asia or North America.

Source: Food and Agriculture Organization; WDI (SN.ITK.DEFC.ZS).



2e The depth of food deficit across regions has narrowed but is still highest in Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia

Depth of food deficit (kilocalories per person per day)

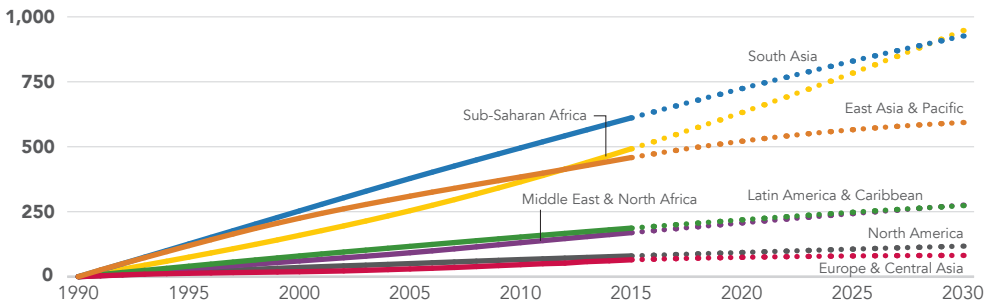


Note: Data are not available for Europe and Central Asia or North America.

Source: Food and Agriculture Organization, Food Security Statistics; WDI (SN.ITK.DFCT).

2f Two-thirds of the projected growth in the world's population by 2030 is in the high-food deficit regions of Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia

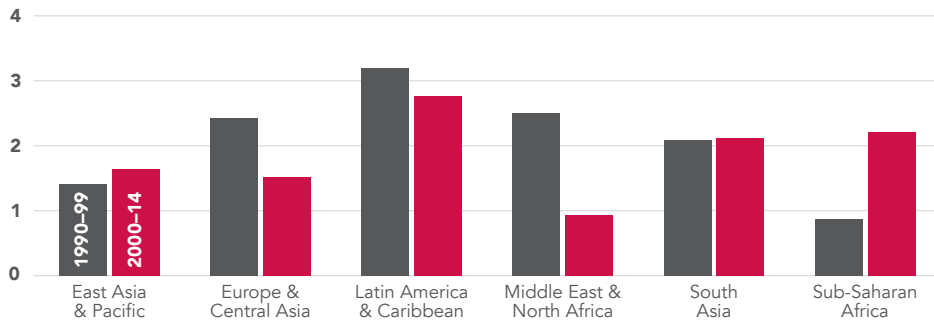
Increase in population since 1990, projected from 2015 (millions)



Source: World Bank Health, Nutrition, and Population Statistics: Population estimates and projections; WDI (SP.POP.TOTL).

2g Cereal yield growth rates have varied across regions, more than doubling in Sub-Saharan Africa and more than halving in the Middle East and North Africa

Cereal yield average annual growth rate (%)



Source: Food and Agriculture Organization; WDI (AG.YLD.CREL.KG).

account for around two-thirds of the change in the global population, anticipated to rise by 16 percent over that period. At the same time, food demand is projected to rise by at least 20 percent globally, with the largest increases in Sub-Saharan Africa (55 percent) and South Asia (25 percent).

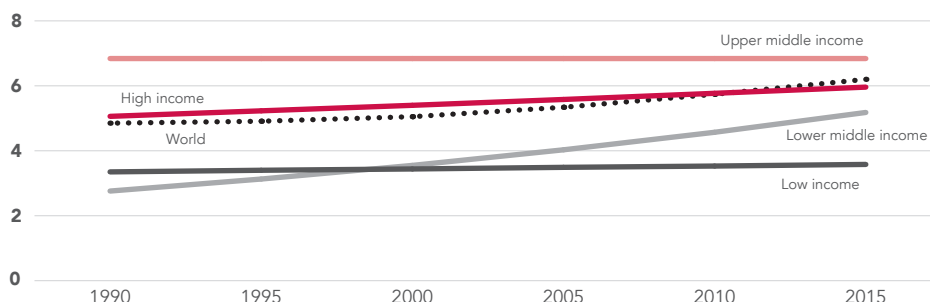
Improving agricultural performance will be central to addressing poverty and food insecurity, as more than three-quarters of poor people still live in rural areas, and nearly two-thirds of the world's poor work in agriculture.⁴ Although cereal yields have accelerated in Sub-Saharan Africa since the 1990s (doubling the cereal yield growth rate), they are not rising fast enough to meet growing food demand. If projected food demand to 2030 in

Sub-Saharan Africa is to be met by productivity gains alone, cereal yields will need to increase at 3 percent a year, about a third higher than the 2.2 percent rate during 2000–14.

Some growth will be met by expanding production to areas currently not under cultivation, but growth in yields will become more important. Climate change could further reduce yields.⁵ In the Middle East and North Africa, cereal yield growth has slowed from 2.5 percent annually in the 1990s to 0.9 percent in 2000–14, less than half the 2 percent annual population growth rate in the region since 2000 (figure 2g). Current cereal yields are highest in East Asia and Pacific (4.9 tons a hectare), and Latin America and the Caribbean (4.1); and lowest in Sub-Saharan Africa (1.5) and

2h The share of children who are overweight is increasing, particularly in lower-middle-income countries

Share of children under 5 who are overweight (%)



Source: World Health Organization Global Database on Child Growth and Malnutrition; WDI (SH.STA.OWGH.ZS).

the Middle East and North Africa (2.3). Yield growth, climate resilience, and enhanced trade will all be needed to help end hunger by 2030.

Addressing overweight and obesity

Overweight and obesity are rising in nearly every country, creating a major global challenge.⁶ Both the prevalence and absolute number of overweight children under five are increasing globally. Upper-middle-income countries have the highest levels of overweight prevalence, while rates have been increasing most rapidly in lower-middle-income and in high-income countries. As both prevalence and population continue to rise, so will the numbers of overweight children. (figure 2h). The WHO target of no increase in childhood overweight by 2025 will not be met if current trends continue.

Notes

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