Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
IFAD International Fund for Agricultural Development
unicef
WFP World Food Programme
World Health Organization
2018

THE STATE OF FOOD SECURITY AND NUTRITION IN THE WORLD

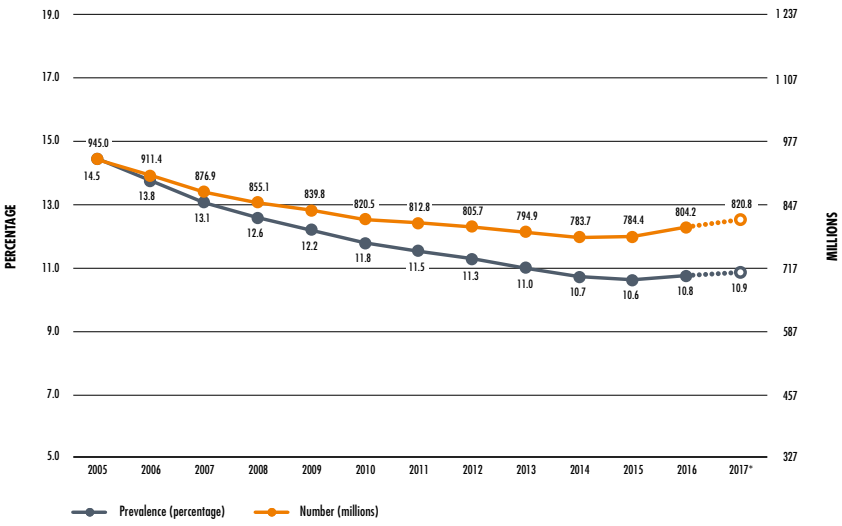
Building Climate Resilience for Food Security and Nutrition

Evidence continues to signal a rise in world hunger. According to available data, the number of people who suffer from hunger has been growing over the past three years, returning to levels from almost a decade ago. The absolute number of people in the world affected by undernourishment, or chronic food deprivation, is now estimated to have increased to nearly 821 million in 2017 from around 804 million in 2016. The situation is worsening in South America and most regions of Africa; likewise, the decreasing trend in undernourishment that characterized Asia until recently seems to be slowing down significantly.

Multiple forms of malnutrition are evident in many countries. Poor access to food and particularly healthy food contributes to undernutrition as well as overweight and obesity. It increases the risk of low birthweight, childhood stunting and anaemia in women of reproductive age, and it is linked to overweight in school-age girls and obesity among women, particularly in upper-middle- and high-income countries. The higher cost of nutritious foods, the stress of living with food insecurity and physiological adaptations to food restriction help explain why food-insecure families may have a higher risk of overweight and obesity.

Additionally, maternal and infant/child food deprivation can result in foetal and early childhood "metabolic imprinting", which increases the risk of obesity and diet-related non-communicable diseases later in life. »

THE NUMBER OF UNDERNOURISHED PEOPLE IN THE WORLD HAS BEEN ON THE RISE SINCE 2014, REACHING AN ESTIMATED 821 MILLION IN 2017



* Projected values, illustrated by dotted lines and empty circles.
SOURCE: FAO.

KEY MESSAGES

➔ New evidence continues to signal a rise in world hunger and a reversal of trends after a prolonged decline. In 2017 the number of undernourished people is estimated to have increased to 821 million – around one out of every nine people in the world.

➔ While some progress continues to be made in reducing child stunting, levels still remain unacceptably high. Nearly 151 million children under five – or over 22 percent – are affected by stunting in 2017.

➔ Wasting continues to affect over 50 million children under five in the world and these children are at increased risk of morbidity and mortality. Furthermore, over 38 million children under five are overweight.

➔ Adult obesity is worsening and more than one in eight adults in the world – more than 672 million – is obese. Undernutrition coexists with overweight and obesity in many countries.

➔ Food insecurity contributes to undernutrition, as well as overweight and obesity. The higher cost of nutritious foods, the stress of living with food insecurity and physiological adaptations to food restriction help explain why food insecure families have a higher risk of overweight and obesity.

➔ Poor access to food increases the risk of low birthweight and stunting in children, which are associated with higher risk of overweight and obesity later in life.

➔ Exposure to more complex, frequent and intense climate extremes is threatening to erode and reverse gains made in ending hunger and malnutrition.

➔ In addition to conflict, climate variability and extremes are among the key drivers behind the recent uptick in global hunger and one of the leading causes of severe food crises. The cumulative effect of changes in climate is undermining all dimensions of food security – food availability, access, utilization and stability.

➔ Nutrition is highly susceptible to changes in climate and bears a heavy burden as a result, as seen in the impaired nutrient quality and dietary diversity of foods produced and consumed, the impacts on water and sanitation, and the effects on patterns of health risks and disease, as well as changes in maternal care, child care and breastfeeding.

➔ Actions need to be accelerated and scaled up to strengthen resilience and adaptive capacity of food systems, people's livelihoods, and nutrition in response to climate variability and extremes.

➔ Solutions require increased partnerships and multi-year, large-scale funding of integrated disaster risk reduction and management and climate change adaptation programmes that are short-, medium- and long-term in scope.

➔ The signs of increasing food insecurity and high levels of different forms of malnutrition are a clear warning of the urgent need for considerable additional work to ensure we "leave no one behind" on the road towards achieving the SDG goals on food security and nutrition.

» Climate variability and extremes are a key driver behind the recent rises in global hunger and one of the leading causes of severe food crises. The changing nature of climate variability and extremes is negatively affecting all dimensions of food security (food availability, access, utilization and stability), as well as reinforcing other underlying causes of malnutrition related to child care and feeding, health services and environmental health. The risk of food insecurity and malnutrition is greater nowadays because livelihoods and livelihood assets – especially of the poor – are more exposed and vulnerable to changing climate variability and extremes.

This year's *The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World* launches an urgent appeal to accelerate and scale up actions to strengthen resilience and adaptive capacity in the face of changing climate variability and increasing extremes.

Part 1 presents the most recent trends in hunger, food insecurity and malnutrition in all its forms with a focus on monitoring progress on SDG Targets 2.1 and 2.2. This year the report also provides a deeper exploration of the indicator of wasting among children under five years of age.

Part 2 closely scrutinizes the extent to which climate variability and extremes are undermining progress in the areas of food security and nutrition through different channels. The analysis ultimately points to guidance on how the key challenges brought about by climate variability and extremes can be overcome if we are to achieve the goals of ending hunger and malnutrition in all forms by 2030 (SDG Targets 2.1 and 2.2) as well as other related SDGs, including taking action to combat climate change and its impacts (SDG13). ■

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The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World is an annual flagship report jointly prepared by FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP and WHO to inform on progress towards ending hunger, achieving food security and improving nutrition and to provide in-depth analysis on key challenges for achieving this goal in the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The report targets a wide audience, including policy-makers, international organizations, academic institutions and the general public.

Subject categories:
Food security
Nutrition
Resilience building
Conflict
Climate change

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