



Food and Agriculture  
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**2017**

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

**Africa**

# REGIONAL OVERVIEW OF FOOD SECURITY AND NUTRITION

**THE FOOD SECURITY AND  
NUTRITION–CONFLICT NEXUS:  
BUILDING RESILIENCE FOR FOOD  
SECURITY, NUTRITION AND PEACE**

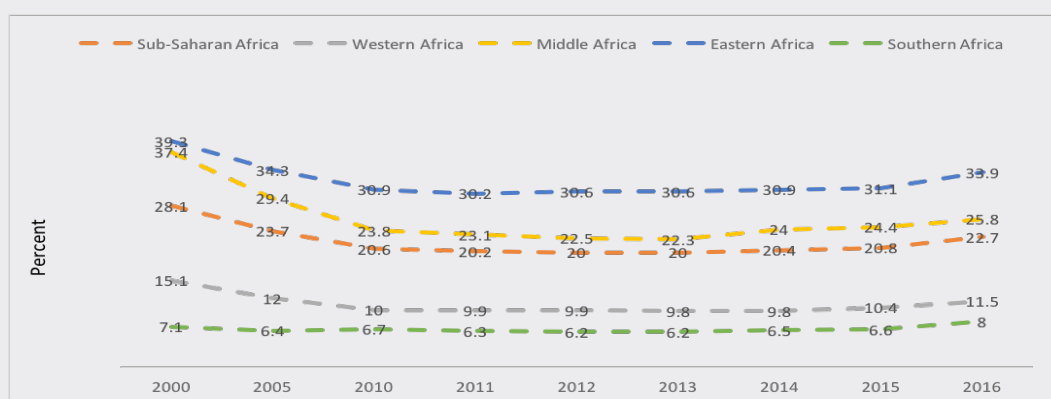
## AFTER A PROLONGED DECLINE, HUNGER APPEARS TO BE ON THE RISE GLOBALLY

Globally, progress in fighting hunger has been steady with the prevalence of undernourishment falling from 14.7 to 10.6 percent between 2000 and 2015, while the corresponding number of undernourished declined from 900 million to 777 million. During the first decade of the 2000s, also sub-Saharan Africa made sound progress in the fight against hunger with the prevalence of

undernourishment falling from 29.1 percent to 20.6 percent (Figure 1 and Table 1).

However, the decline has slowed and the most recent data show that globally, between 2015 and 2016 the prevalence of undernourished may have risen slightly from 10.6 to 11.0 percent and the number of undernourished rose from 777 million to 815 million. In sub-Saharan Africa the prevalence of undernourishment in all regions of the continent has remained flat since 2010 and then, from 2015 to 2016, rose from 20.8 to 22.7 percent. In 2016, there were about 224 million undernourished people in sub-Saharan Africa, up from 200 million in 2015.

FIGURE 1  
PREVALENCE OF UNDERNOURISHMENT IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA AND SUBREGIONS, IN 2000–2016



Source: FAO

TABLE 1  
UNDERNOURISHMENT IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA AND SUBREGIONS, 2000–2016

Region/Year	Prevalence (%)				Number (millions)				
	2000	2005	2010	2016	2000	2005	2010	2015	2016
Sub-Saharan Africa	28.1	23.7	20.6	22.7	178.4	171.4	171.2	200.2	224.3
Western Africa	15.1	12.0	10.0	11.5	35.6	32.2	30.9	36.8	41.6
Middle Africa	37.4	29.4	23.8	25.8	35.9	32.9	31.1	37.1	40.4
Eastern Africa	39.3	34.3	30.9	33.9	112.7	112.7	116.6	122.2	137.2
Southern Africa	7.1	6.4	6.7	8.0	3.6	3.5	4.0	4.1	5.0

Source: FAO



In many countries, the worsening situation in 2015 and 2016 can be attributed to adverse climatic conditions, often linked to the El Niño phenomenon, resulting in poor harvests and the loss of livestock. Conflict, sometimes in combination with drought or floods, also contributed to severe food insecurity in several countries. Lower commodity prices and a difficult global economic environment have furthermore contributed to the worsening food security situation.

The worrying trend in undernourishment is not yet reflected in the series of indicators referring to nutritional outcomes in the region, with the prevalence of stunting and wasting for children under the age of five continuing to decline gradually. However, progress in reducing multiple forms of malnutrition, as monitored through six, interlinked, World Health Assembly global nutrition targets for 2025 has been poor, and only a small proportion of countries are on track to meet the targets for wasting and stunting in children under five and anaemia in women of reproductive age. A relatively large proportion of countries are on track to meeting the WHA target for overweight in children, but the rates for adult obesity are soaring in all regions and are especially high in Southern Africa.

### **Policies and programmes to support food security and nutrition**

The importance of strengthening agricultural policies to achieve economic growth, poverty reduction and food and nutrition security in sub-Saharan Africa was recognized by African Union Heads of State and Government when they ratified the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) in 2003 in Maputo. It has since heavily influenced agricultural policy at regional and national levels and is arguably the most successful continent-wide development effort in history.

Specifically, CAADP set two targets: (1) to achieve 6 percent annual growth in agricultural productivity by 2015, and (2) to increase the allocation of national budgets directed to the agricultural sector to at least 10 percent. While the achievements in terms of targets 1 and 2 are mixed, CAADP had, and continues to have, a noticeable impact on raising agricultural public investment and growth, reducing poverty and advancing mutual accountability. CAADP has also influenced debate and resource allocation in the international development community.

### **The Malabo Declaration**

The Malabo Declaration of 2014, reaffirmed the principles and values of the CAADP process and recommitted to the two targets established by the Maputo Declaration. It furthermore set commitments to end hunger and halve poverty by 2025, boost intra-African trade, and enhance the resilience of livelihoods and production systems to climate change and other shocks, and it expanded on the mutual accountability requirements.

Across the board, countries have developed and are developing policy frameworks and investment plans that are aligned, or efforts are being made to align them, with the goals of the Malabo Declaration and SDG 2. Through CAADP, policy processes are coherent, and this initiative has raised the profile of agriculture and heavily influenced agricultural policy at regional and national levels.

Considerable challenges remain, funding being perhaps the most important of these. While nearly all countries have significantly increased agricultural expenditures, only five have met the CAADP's 10 percent benchmark. Most NAIPs are not fully implemented. Countries also do not always allocate budgets along NAIP priorities, or areas that generate the highest returns in terms of growth and development outcomes. For example, only about 40 percent of countries for which data is available met the national agriculture expenditure target for R&D of at least 1 percent of agricultural value added, as set by NEPAD. Furthermore, capacity for technical analysis and monitoring and evaluation is constrained.

### **Conflict, food security and nutrition**

Much evidence shows that conflict is a leading cause of food insecurity, hunger and poverty and that people living in countries affected by conflict are more likely to be food insecure and malnourished. A majority, or 489 million, of the 815 million people in the world that were undernourished in 2016 live in countries struggling with conflict, violence and fragility.

Although the frequency of wars has decreased over the decades, there has recently been a surge in the number of violent conflicts and conflict-related deaths. Over one third of the world's highly violent conflicts took place in sub-Saharan Africa and of 19 conflict-affected countries in protracted crises, 13 are in sub-Saharan Africa.

The impact of conflict on rural livelihoods is particularly severe in countries with large rural and agricultural sectors, many of which are in sub-Saharan Africa. This economic upheaval translates into reduction in availability, access, stability and utilization of food, that is to say it causes food insecurity and hunger.

### Can food insecurity and undernutrition trigger conflict?

Conflict not only leads to food insecurity but food insecurity and malnutrition can also become conflict multipliers and vectors for other grievances, especially in fragile post-conflict situations, and often contributing to fragility by weakening institutions, one of the main drivers of fragility.

Food insecurity reflects deteriorating economic circumstances, which in many countries in sub-Saharan Africa are directly related to conditions in agriculture. Studies find that economic welfare is the factor most consistently linked to conflict, although it is important to keep in mind that multiple factors drive conflict.

Many people move to neighbouring areas or other countries when faced with food insecurity and/or violence, and the ensuing pressure on resources often helps fuel conflict. In 2015 Sub-Saharan Africa hosted

32 percent of the world's refugees and about 29 percent of internally displaced persons assisted by the UNHCR.

Measuring the impact of food insecurity on conflict is difficult, precisely because a confluence of factors are typically the driving factors of conflict. However, numerous studies have found a link between temperature and precipitation and civil conflict. A review of 55 studies found that deviations from moderate temperatures and precipitation patterns systematically increase the risk of conflict.

### Building resilience for food security and peace

Conflicts are usually complex and multifaceted and addressing these complexities, and not only post-conflict, is essential to sustain peace. Often, other shocks occur with conflict, and building household resilience is necessary for lasting peace. Once these complexities are acknowledged, a range of pathways can be identified through which support to food security and livelihoods can also help build resilience against conflict and contribute to sustaining peace. Given the complexity of conflicts and the conflict-food insecurity nexus, which climate change may amplify, a sustainable impact of food security and nutrition-related interventions on peace is more likely when implemented as part of a broader, multisectoral set of interventions before, during and after conflict.

## KEY MESSAGES

→ In sub-Saharan Africa, the prevalence of undernourishment appears to have risen from 20.8 to 22.7 percent between 2015 and 2016, and the number of people undernourished rose from 200 to 224 million, accounting for 25 percent of the 815 million people undernourished in the world in 2016. At the same time, the proportion of the population that has experienced severe food insecurity because of their inability to access food has risen in the region.

→ Adverse climatic conditions and conflict, often occurring concurrently, are key factors driving the recent increase in food insecurity in the region. A difficult global economic environment, reflected in falling prices of extractive and non-extractive commodities and weak growth, also contributed to increased food insecurity in many countries.

→ Despite a rising prevalence of undernourishment, rates of stunting continue to decline while levels of overweight and obesity continue to grow, notably in Southern Africa in terms of the latter. Progress towards the World Health Assembly global nutrition targets has been poor and a majority of countries need to step up their efforts, especially with regard to reducing anaemia in women of reproductive age as well as stunting and wasting in children.

→ The improvements achieved by many countries manifests that cumulatively, the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme has contributed significantly to raising agricultural public investment and growth, reducing poverty and advancing mutual accountability in sub-Saharan Africa. This momentum needs to be sustained through effective

implementation and delivery on the goals of the Malabo Declaration on agriculture, integrating it with the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development and the Decade of Action on Nutrition.

→ Effective implementation and delivery of policies and investment plans aligned with the Malabo Declaration requires adequate funding, setting the right priorities and strengthening institutional capacities.

→ In sub-Saharan Africa, a majority of the population undernourished in 2016 live in countries affected by conflict. The prevalence of undernourishment is about twice as high in conflict-affected countries with a protracted crisis than in countries not affected by conflict, and nutrition outcomes are also generally worse in these countries.

→ For all countries in sub-Saharan Africa attaining food and nutrition security while addressing climate change and the degradation of the environment is a primary challenge. A further dimension is added to this challenge in countries that are in fragile situations and have weak institutions. In these countries food insecurity may itself be a trigger for conflict, and or prolong conflicts.

→ Conflict-sensitive and timely interventions aimed at improving food security and nutrition can contribute to building resilience and sustaining peace. A sustainable impact on peace is more likely when implemented as part of a broader set of multisectoral humanitarian, developmental and peace related interventions at country, subregional and regional level.

