



Food and Agriculture  
Organization of the  
United Nations

2015

# Regional Overview of Food Insecurity Europe and Central Asia



**Focus on healthy  
and balanced nutrition**

# 2015

FAO's Regional Overview

## Europe and Central Asia

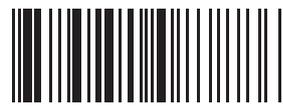
### *Key messages*

- As a region, Europe and Central Asia has achieved the Millennium Development Goal hunger target of reducing by half the proportion of people affected by hunger.
- Progress on reducing the incidence of hunger differs from country to country, with the Central Asian countries having the most difficulty.
- Despite positive trends in food security, child malnutrition continues to be a problem in the region – in both rich and poor countries. This can be seen in relatively high rates of stunting in the Caucasus and Central Asian countries, and alarming levels of anaemia in children under 5 in several countries.
- Overweight and obesity are an increasing nutrition, health and budgetary issue in the region. Child overweight rates are double those for the developing world.
- Countries across the region differ in their strategies for ensuring food security. Some emphasize food self-sufficiency, while others pursue a more liberal trade regime and activist agricultural development policies as the path to food security.



Food and Agriculture  
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ISBN 978-92-5-108788-6



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I4649E/1/05.15

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2015

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ISBN 978-92-5-108788-6

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# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This regional overview of food security in Europe and Central Asia is the result of a collaborative effort led by David Sedik, Senior Policy Officer, and Guljahan Kurbanova, Economist and Senior Consultant, under the guidance of Vladimir Rakhmanin, FAO Assistant Director-General and Regional Representative for Europe and Central Asia.

Contributions and peer review were provided by many FAO staff across the Europe and Central Asia network of offices, and from experts in the Agricultural and Economics Division at FAO Headquarters.

# FOREWORD

**By Vladimir Rakhmanin**

*Assistant Director-General and Regional Representative  
for Europe and Central Asia*

As a region, Europe and Central Asia has achieved the Millennium Development Goal target of reducing by half the proportion of people affected by hunger.

Of course, progress on reducing the incidence of hunger has differed from country to country, with the Central Asian countries having more of a struggle than others. Still, this is an important achievement that the region can justly be proud of.

Taken as a whole, Europe and Central Asia is now one of the leading commodity exporters in the world. Growth in food production since 2000 – combined with a diminished demand for feed grains – has led to the creation of a sizeable grain export surplus in the region.

Yet, despite positive trends in food security, child malnutrition continues to be a problem in the region – and this is the reality for both rich and poor countries. We continue to see relatively high rates of stunting among children in the Caucasus and Central Asian countries, and alarming levels of anaemia in children under age 5 in several countries.

Overweight and obesity are increasing cause for concern in the region. With child overweight rates double what they are in other regions, this is an issue that not only puts individual health and nutrition at risk, but also puts a strain on public health budgets.

With 53 Member Countries, no FAO region is more vast or diverse than Europe and Central Asia. As you will see in these pages, we find that countries across Europe and Central Asia differ in their strategies for ensuring food security. Some emphasize food self-sufficiency, while others pursue a more liberal trade regime and activist agricultural development policies as the path to food security.

With full respect to the interests and diversity of all countries, FAO is here to bring technical expertise, best practices and practical support to the countries of Europe and Central Asia as they tackle the food and nutrition issues of today.

# ACRONYMS

BE	Belarus
CCA	Caucasus and Central Asia
CIS	Commonwealth of Independent States
ECA	Europe and Central Asia
EEU	Eurasian Economic Union
EU	European Union
KG	Kyrgyzstan
KZ	Kazakhstan
MDG	Millennium Development Goal(s)
RU	Russian Federation
SOFI	The State of Food and Agriculture (annual FAO publication)
TJ	Tajikistan
TM	Turkmenistan
USD	United States dollar(s)
UZ	Uzbekistan

## ***The Europe and Central Asia Region has reached the Millennium Development Goal hunger target of reducing by half the proportion of people affected by hunger***

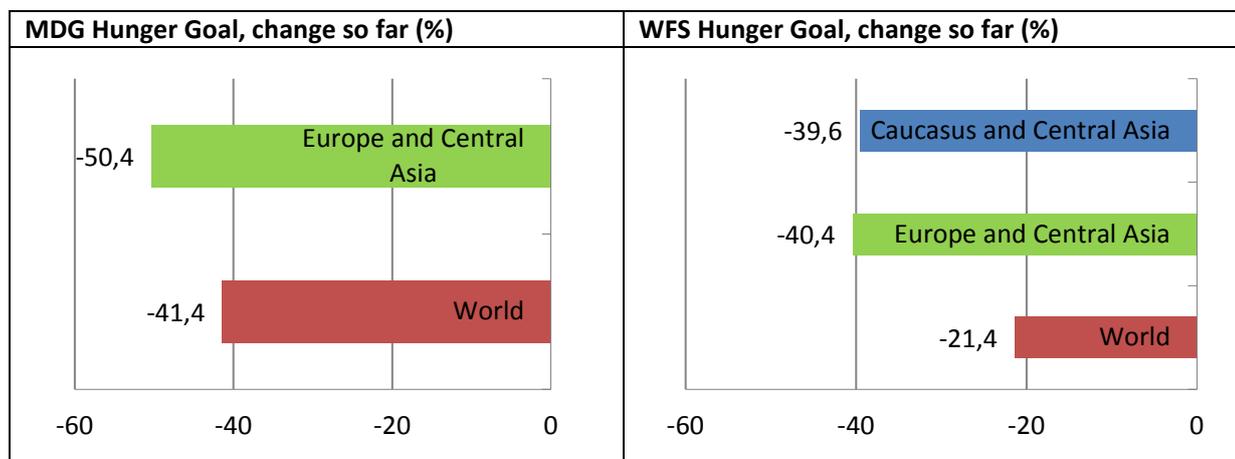
The Europe and Central Asia region (ECA) has achieved Millennium Development Goal 1C, to halve the proportion of undernourished people, with undernourishment at less than 5 percent in the region since 2010-12, the lowest of all five FAO regions.<sup>1,2</sup> All countries in the region have made considerable progress in reducing the incidence of hunger, and all except one has halved the incidence of hunger even before the 2015 deadline (Figure 1).

Progress on reducing the incidence of hunger from the 1990/92 baseline differs from country to country in the region with the Central Asian countries having slower progress. The Caucasus countries (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia) as well as Kazakhstan achieved the MDG 1C target as early as 2006. Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan achieved this goal in 2014-16. Tajikistan has consistently had the highest rate of undernourishment in the region (the percentage of the population with a caloric intake below the minimum

dietary energy requirement). The prevalence of undernourishment in Tajikistan was estimated at 28.1 percent in 1990-1992, climbing to 33.2 percent in 2014-2016. Civil war (1992-1997) and rapid population growth (5.5 million in 1991 to 8.2 million today) influenced these results.

The ECA Region is also close to achieving the World Food Summit (WFS) goal to halve the absolute number of undernourished people from the 1990/92 baseline, a feat achieved by few countries (Figure 1). The WFS goal is to reduce by half the absolute number of people living in hunger, while the MDG 1C goal is to halve the percent of hungry people as a portion of the population. In the ECA region the total number of hungry was reduced from 9.9 million to 5.9 million between 1990/92 and 2014/16. This represents a decline in the number of undernourished of about 40%, far better than the decline in the world as a whole.

**Figure 1. Progress towards achievement of the MDG and WFS hunger goals (%)**



Source: FAO, SOFI 2015.

<sup>1</sup>Goal 1 of the MDGs is to “eradicate extreme poverty and hunger”. It includes goal 1A (to halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people living on less than US \$ 1.25 a day), 1B (achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all, including women and youth) and 1C (halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people suffering hunger).

<sup>2</sup>“Europe and Central Asia” includes developing countries under the responsibility of the FAO Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkey, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.

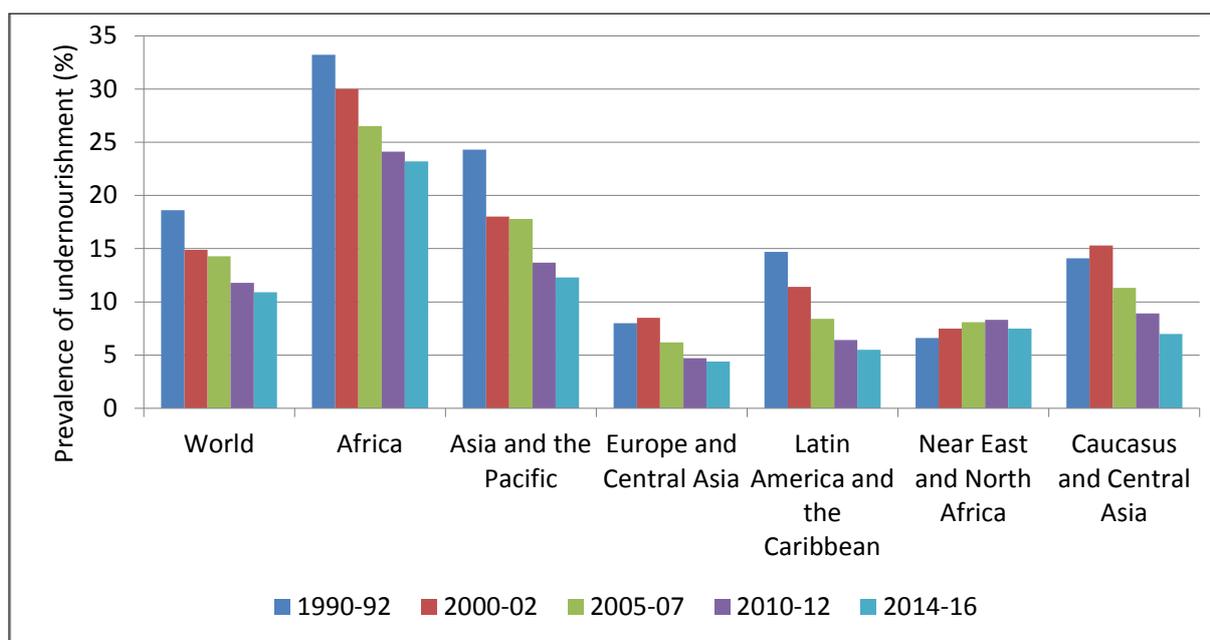
## The region has seen a steady decline in the prevalence of undernourishment since 2000

The positive trend in the reduction of undernourishment in the ECA region since 1990 can be divided into two sub-periods. From 1990-2000 the average level of undernourishment in the region as a whole and in most countries was either constant or rose slightly. Between 1990 and 2000 the level of undernourishment in the region grew by 0.5 percent or 1.6 million people.

The rise in undernourishment was caused by falling income during this period and a sharp rise in poverty, a result of the so-called “transition recession.” While in 1990 one in twenty five persons was living in poverty, by the early 2000s one out of five people were living

on less than USD 2.15 per day.<sup>3</sup> After 2000, when income in the entire region began to rise robustly, the level of undernourishment in the entire region fell rapidly. This pattern, which can be seen in Figures 2 and 3, differs from the pattern in other regions of the world where the prevalence of hunger has been falling or rising (Near East and North Africa) continuously. The exceptions to this general ECA pattern are the Caucasus countries (Armenia, Georgia and Azerbaijan) where income and agricultural growth began earlier than in other post-Soviet countries. Consequently, the level of undernourishment fell earlier in these countries (Figure 3).

**Figure 2. Prevalence of undernourishment across the FAO SOFI regions and in Caucasus and Central Asia, 1990/92-2014/16 (%)**

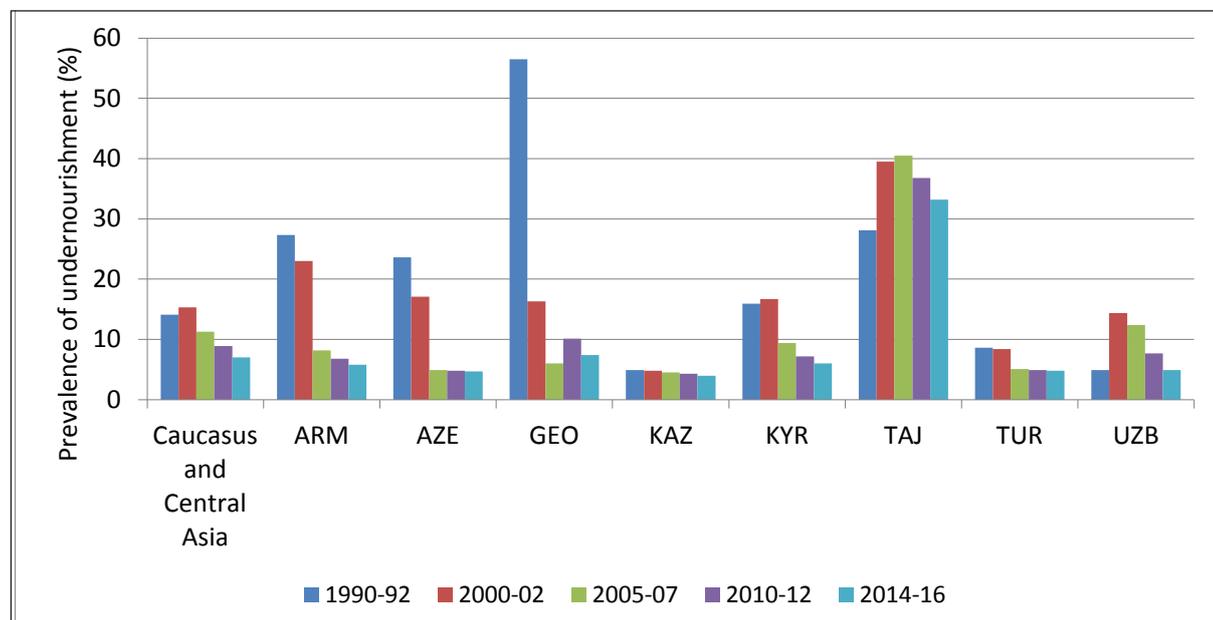


Note: “Caucasus and Central Asia” includes the following countries: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.

Source: FAO, SOFI 2015

<sup>3</sup> World Bank: Growth, Poverty, and Inequality: Eastern Europe and Former Soviet Union. 2005

**Figure 3. Prevalence of undernourishment in the Caucasus and Central Asia sub-region, by country, 1990/92-2014/16 (%)**



Note: Abbreviations: Armenia (ARM), Azerbaijan (AZE), Georgia (GEO), Kazakhstan (KAZ), Kyrgyzstan (KYR), Tajikistan (TAJ), Turkmenistan (TUR) and Uzbekistan (UZB).

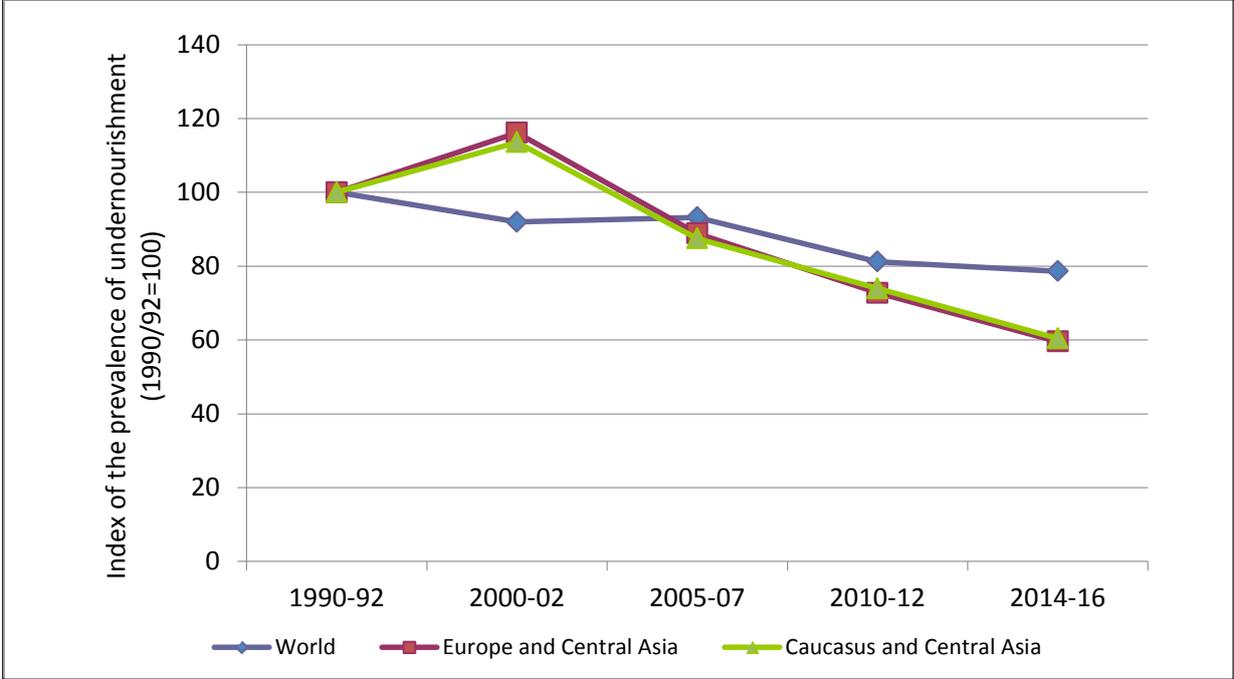
Source: FAO, SOFI 2015

The level of undernourishment remains high (by international standards) in only one country of the region, Tajikistan. In 2014/16 33 percent of the population of Tajikistan remained undernourished. This actually represents a slight increase of undernourishment since the 1990/92 base period. However, for this country it is more useful to count the progress made in undernourishment since the end of the civil war there in 1997. Since 2005/07 there has been a continuous fall in undernourishment from 40 percent to 33 percent in 2014/16.

***The absolute number of the hungry in the region fell by 40% since 1990/92, which is much better than the world and is not far from the WFS goal***

Figure 4 illustrates progress made in the world, the ECA region and in the Caucasus and Central Asia sub-region in meeting the World Food Summit (WFS) goal of reducing the absolute number of hungry by half. In 2014/16 the total number of undernourished stood at 5.9 million (SOFI, 2015) in Europe and Central Asia as a whole, out of which nearly half lived in Tajikistan. This total represents a 40 percent reduction in the absolute number of hungry since 1990/92 (from 9.9 million). Though the region did not reach the WFS goal of reducing the absolute number of the hungry by 50 percent, the region still did much better than the world as a whole.

**Figure 4. Progress toward the WFS hunger target: World, Europe and Central Asia and Caucasus and Central Asia (index, 1990/92=100)**



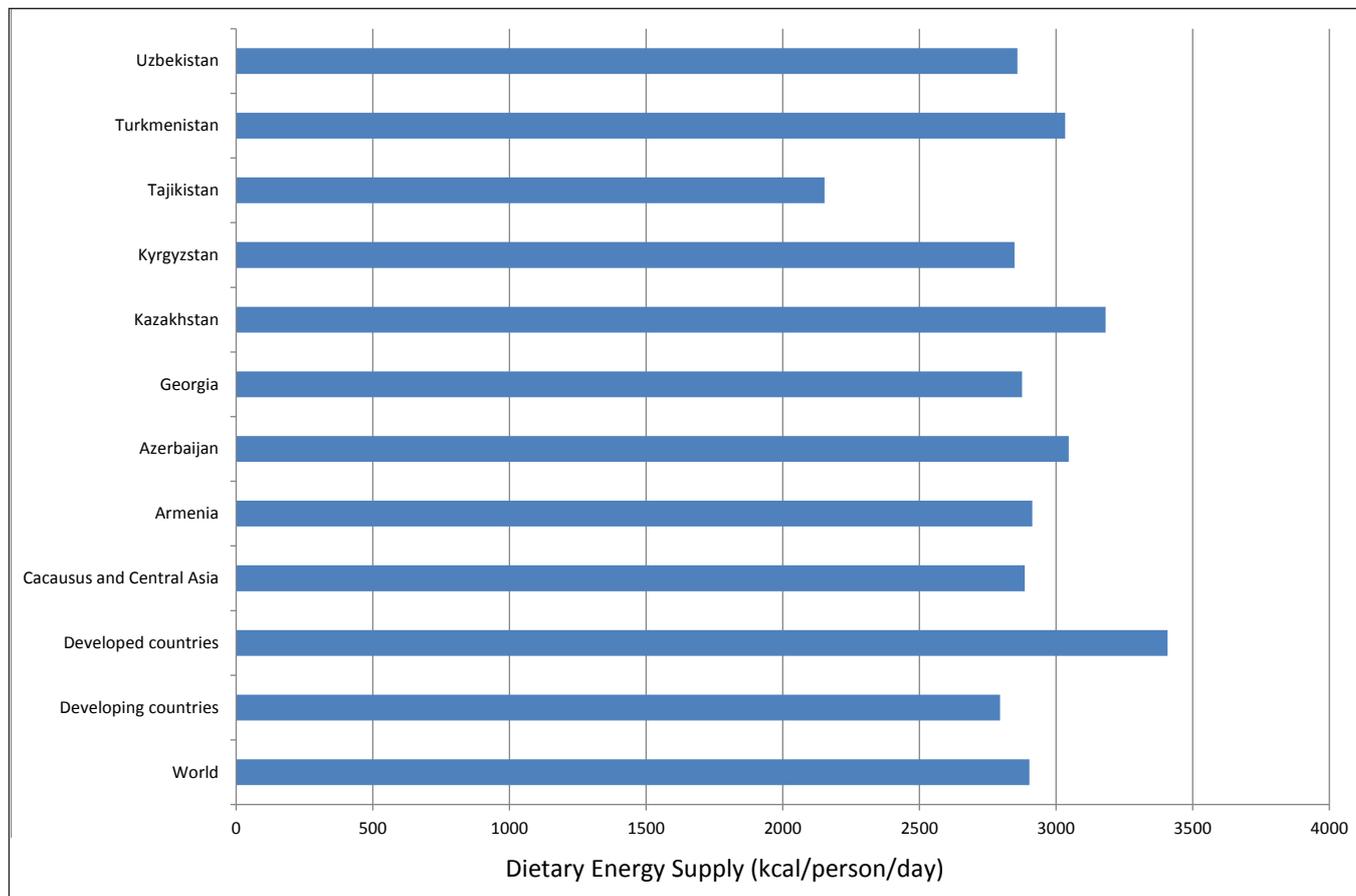
Source: Adapted from FAO, SOFI 2015

**Average food availability is adequate or better in almost all countries of the region**

The ECA region has already attained a high level of dietary energy supply (DES), the average total number of calories available per person. All countries of the region except one have a DES above 2500 kcal/person/day, well above the minimum daily recommended requirement which ranges from about 1800 to 2200 kcal per person per day (depending on the country). In the CCA sub-region the average calorie availability is 2885 (kcal/person/day), quite close to the world average of 2902 (kcal/person/day) (Figure 5).

According to latest estimates, all countries of the ECA region but one have an adequate average level of calories available to their populations (Figure 6). In Tajikistan, the average dietary energy supply reached 97% of the level recommended for a healthy life. Thus, overall in the region, food availability measured in average caloric availability is not of concern and the country that has not reached the level – Tajikistan – is also making progress.

**Figure 6. Dietary energy supply by countries, regions and worldwide (kcal/person/day), 2014/16**

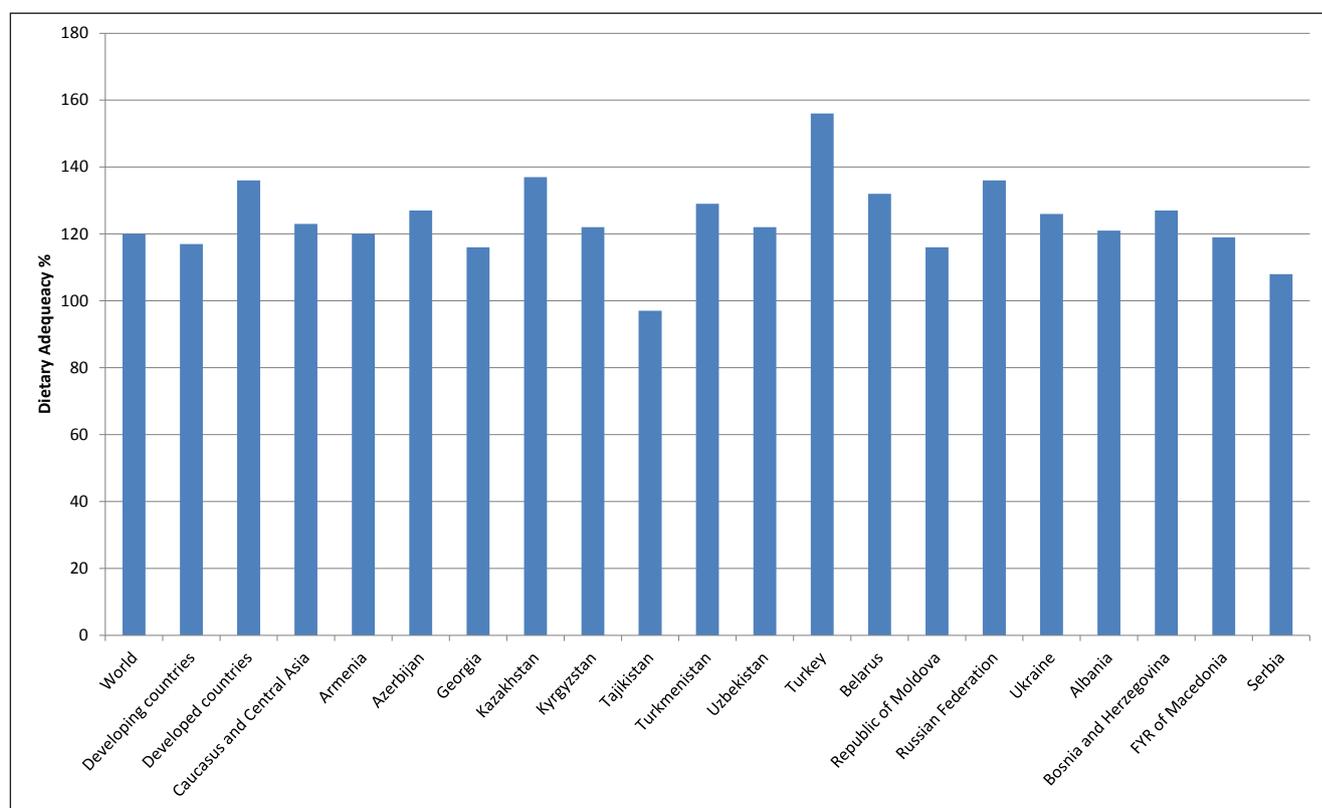


Source: FAO, SOFI 2015

The average dietary energy supply is calculated as the caloric equivalent of food available to the population per day divided by the population. It thus depends partially on the production of food made available domestically. In the region the average value of food production has been steadily increasing over the

past fifteen years. Between 2000/02 and 2011/13, the value of food production per capita in the CCA countries increased by 41 percent (FAO, SOFI 2015), more than double the rate of global agricultural growth.

Figure 6. Average dietary energy supply adequacy (ADES), 2014/16 (%)<sup>4</sup>



Source: FAO, SOFI 2015

Although agricultural production has significantly increased both in ECA and CCA, the situation in Tajikistan and Georgia can be improved. In both countries the value of food production per capita (in USD) is very low, much below the world average (331 USD per capita) and the average for developing countries (USD 272). Low food production per capita is correlated with the DES adequacy in Figure 6: Georgia and Tajikistan, as well as Moldova, have the lowest DES adequacy of the post-Soviet countries. Tajikistan has also scored low on the “depth of food deficit” indicator, which is used to measure the number of calories needed to lift the undernourished out of hunger. Tajikistan’s food deficit averaged 250 kcal per person per day (2012/14).

### Access to food improved through poverty reduction

Regional poverty aggregates illustrate that poverty rates in Europe and Central Asia are approximately on the level of those in the Middle East and North Africa and Latin America and Caribbean regions (Table 7), using an international poverty line of \$2.50 per capita per day. Changes in poverty headcounts also parallel those in these other two regions. Despite some growth during the 1990s, poverty rates in all three regions remained stagnant. This pattern changed after 2000 when poverty rates fell rapidly. In Europe and Central Asia this turnaround was a result of the accumulation of institutional reforms and higher growth rates. Growth accelerated from 1.8 percent per year in 1993 to 2002 to 8.3 percent per year from 2002 to 2011. As a consequence, poverty rates stagnated at about 47% between 1993 and 2002, but fell to 24% by 2011.

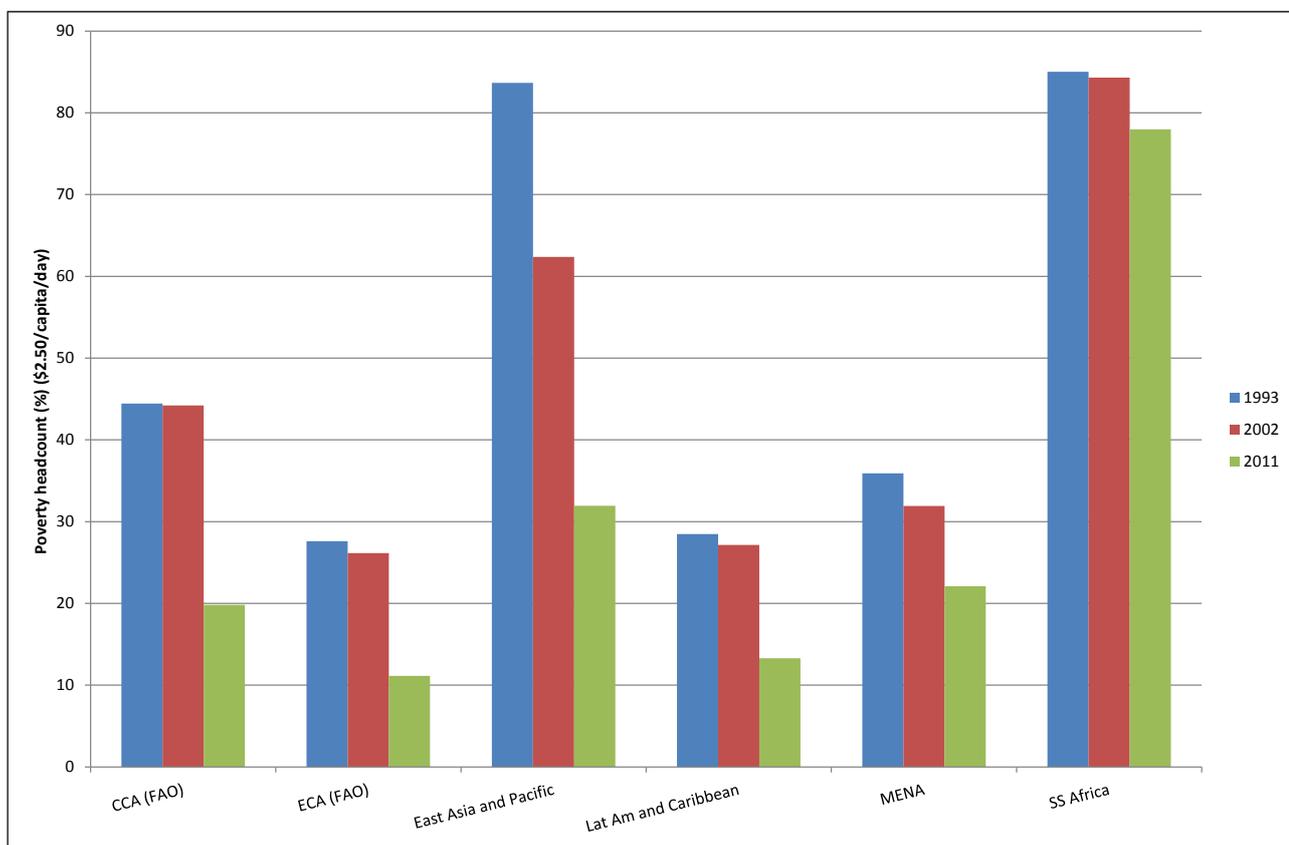
<sup>4</sup> The Average Dietary Energy Supply Adequacy (ADES) expresses the Dietary Energy Supply (DES) as a percentage of the Average Dietary Energy Requirement (ADER). Each country’s or region’s average supply of calories for food consumption is normalized by the average dietary energy requirement estimated for its population to provide an index of adequacy of the food supply in terms of calories.

Country level poverty rates for the ECA region are largely consistent with the regional trends, though not entirely (Figure 8). Energy importing countries and Kazakhstan follow this pattern of stagnating or increasing poverty in the 1990s, followed by sizeable decreases in poverty after 2000. However, two energy exporters, Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan, achieved remarkable progress in poverty eradication throughout the 1990s and 2000s.

The international poverty line of \$2.50 per capita per day is often viewed as an appropriate poverty line for Europe and Central Asia because of colder temperatures and higher costs

of living. Perhaps because of the need to include higher costs of living associated with colder climates, the \$2.50 per capita per day line is not a “food only” poverty line. Thus, there is not a one-to-one mapping of countries with higher poverty rates to those with significant hunger problems. Taking the 2011 poverty estimates as a guide, the countries of concern in the region were Armenia, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan. However, of these countries only four—Armenia, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan—faced undernourishment levels above 5 percent in 2010/2012, and only Georgia and Tajikistan had levels exceeding 10 percent (Figure 3).

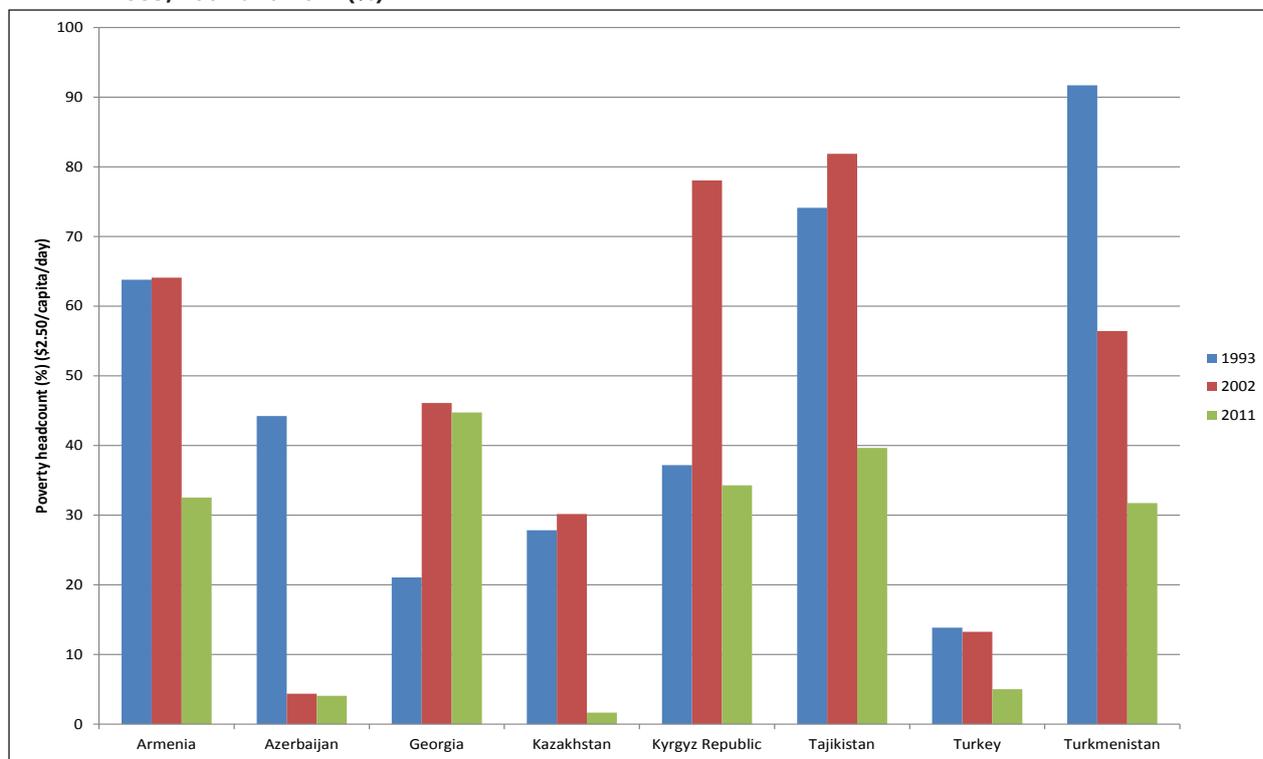
**Figure 7. Regional poverty headcounts using international \$2.50 per day poverty line, 1993, 2002 and 2011 (%)**



Note: This figure is based on Povcalnet calculations of poverty rates for the FAO SOFI regions for Caucasus and Central Asia (CCA), Europe and Central Asia (ECA). The aggregates do not include Uzbekistan, because no valid information on purchasing power parity for that country is available. Therefore, international poverty measures can not be computed. The other aggregates are World Bank regions which may differ slightly from FAO regions. MENA is Middle East and North Africa, and SS Africa is Sub-Saharan Africa.

Source: World Bank Povcalnet (2015).

**Figure 8. Europe and Central Asia: Poverty headcounts using international \$2.50 per day poverty line, 1993, 2002 and 2011 (%)**



Note: Based on Povcalnet calculations of poverty rates for countries in the FAO SOFI Europe and Central Asian region. The figure does not include Uzbekistan, because no valid information on purchasing power parity for that country is available. Therefore, international poverty measures can not be computed.

Source: World Bank, Povcalnet (2015).

### ***Child malnutrition has improved, but is still a problem in the region***

The news on food security in the Europe and Central Asian region is mostly positive. The average level of calorie availability is not a concern in this region, with one exception.

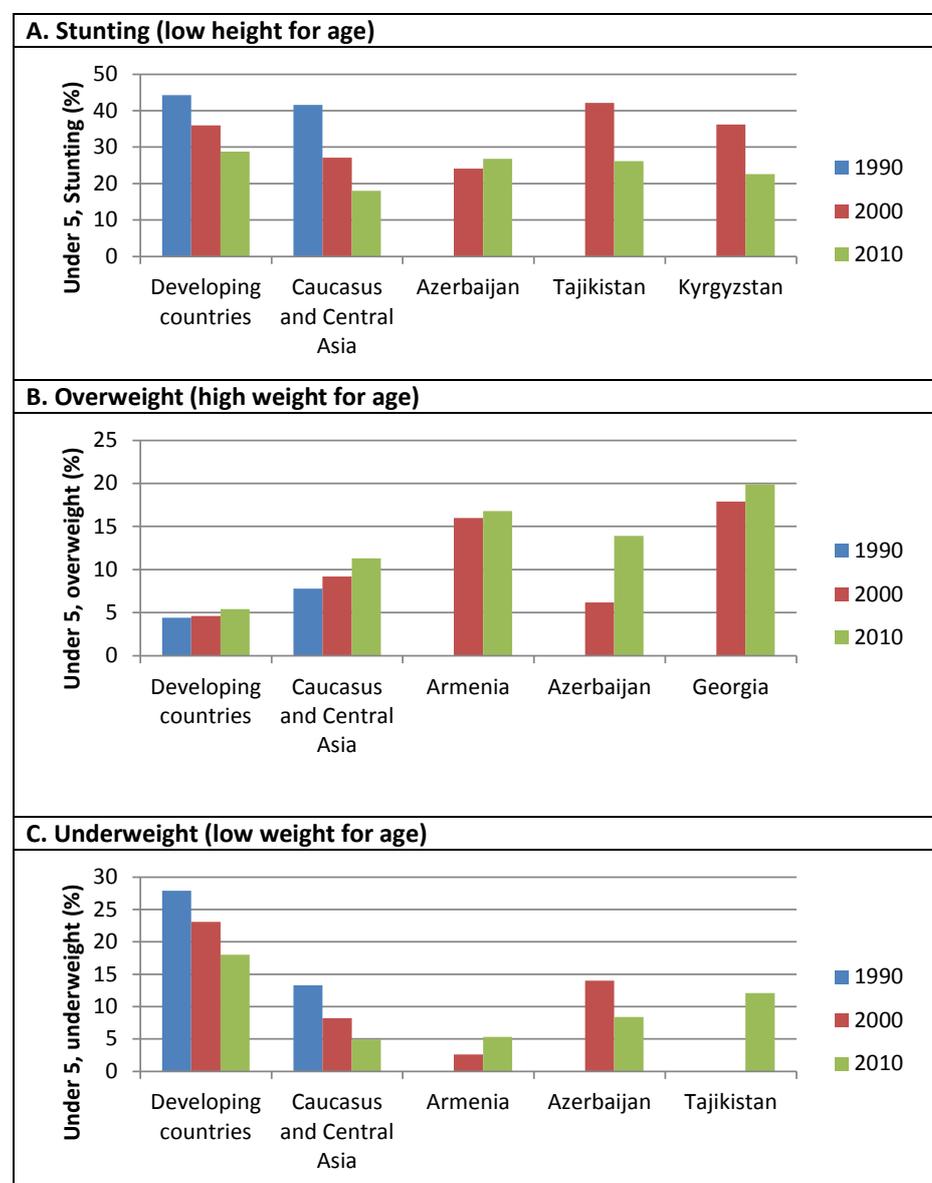
Moreover, the sharp decline in poverty levels after 2000 has lowered the portion of the undernourished population to below 10% in all countries of the region except for Tajikistan. Despite these positive trends, the region as a whole—both rich and poor countries—suffers from malnutrition in the form of micronutrient deficiencies. The impact of malnutrition can be seen in the relatively high rates of stunting (low height for age) in children less than 5 years of age in the Caucasus and Central Asian countries (Figure 9A). Though underweight (low weight for age) and stunting (low height for age) have improved dramatically in the region, a stunting rate of 18% (2010) in the CCA countries is quite high (Figure 9C). Some of the countries where stunting for children under 5 is particular-

ly high are Azerbaijan (26.8% in 2006), Tajikistan (26.2 %; 2012) and Kyrgyzstan (17.7%, 2013).

In addition to stunting, an alarming level of anaemia in children under 5 across the region is observed in Armenia (34.4%), Azerbaijan (35.2 %), Kyrgyzstan (35.8%), and Uzbekistan (43.2%). It has been also quite high in Georgia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Moldova and Tajikistan (between 26 and 28 %). To a large extent the nutritional status of children depends on the health of women. The prevalence of anaemia among pregnant women in the region has been steadily decreasing since 1990, but it still remains high in Armenia (27.6%), Azerbaijan (30.7 percent), Bosnia and Herzegovina (26.6%), Cyprus (30,9 %), Kyrgyzstan (29.9%), Moldova (27.5%), Tajikistan (27.8%), Turkmenistan (31,8%), and Uzbekistan (34,8%).<sup>5</sup>

<sup>5</sup> All figures pertain to 2011. WHO, UNICEF-WHO-The World Bank: Joint child malnutrition estimates - Levels and trends Child Malnutrition (2015).

Figure 9. Child malnutrition indicators, 1990, 2000 and 2010



Note: For country indicators, data from the closest years to 2000 and 2010 were used.

Sources: UNICEF, *Child Malnutrition Interactive Dashboard* (2015); WHO, *Global Health Observatory Data Repository*, (2015).

The prevalence of overweight children under 5 in the Caucasus and Central Asian countries is more similar to levels in middle to high income countries, though Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan are currently classified as low income countries (Figure 9B). While the average prevalence of overweight children under 5 in high middle income countries (World Bank classification) was 12% in 2013, the prevalence of overweight children under 5 in Armenia (16.8%, 2010), Azerbaijan (13.9%, 2006), Georgia (19.9%, 2009), Kazakhstan (13.3%, 2010/11) and Uzbekistan (12.8%, 2006) was higher.

The high prevalence of overweight children under 5 in Caucasus and Central Asia relative to income level is an indicator of a broader problem of overweight and obesity that pertains to both children and adults in post-socialist countries of Eurasia. In this section the poorest countries of Eurasia (Caucasus and Central Asia) are considered. In the richer countries such as Russia, Ukraine and Belarus and the Balkan countries the problem is more severe. Whereas in the more affluent countries of the European Union health care facilities are sufficient to address the ill effects of overweight, in the low to medium income countries of the post-Soviet and Balkan region the rising burden of non-communicable disease is met with much greater difficulty.

### ***Overview of food security and nutrition policies in Caucasus and Central Asia subregion***

The previous analysis has shown that while food insecurity in the sense of undernourishment is not as important an issue as it once was in the region, malnutrition and overweight are growing problems. Thus, the nature of food insecurity in the region has changed and will continue changing in this direction. Considering the entire period from the early 1990s to today, the changing nature of food insecurity is a testament to the success of policies in the region to reduce poverty and undernourishment. Food production and poverty alleviation have been high priorities for most governments in Caucasus and Central Asian countries, and almost every country has either a national program on food security and poverty alleviation.

In general, four major policy directions to promote food security can be identified in the countries of the CCA sub-region: i) with regard to food availability, most of the governments supported improvements in agricultural production, in some cases with the goal of achieving food self-sufficiency; ii) in relation to food availability and access, trade interventions have been a common tool for either protecting a country from imports (with the aim to favor domestic production) or for discouraging exports (with the aim of lowering domestic prices for consumers); iii) to address concerns about food access, food price controls are widely used for a set of basic food items; iv) for ensuring food stability, market interventions and management of commodity stocks have been adopted.

However, food security policies in the Caucasus and Central Asian countries are often influenced by and are part of the larger policy debate on food security of the post-Soviet region. Thus, it may be more fruitful to consider CCA policies on food security in the context of the entire post-Soviet region.

### ***Diversity of food security policies in the post-Soviet region***

The post-Soviet region can be divided into two groups of countries, based on their vision of food security. The first group includes Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, the Russian Federation, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan<sup>6</sup> where food security is defined as “food independence” (BE, KG, KZ, RU, TJ, TM, UZ), and in the majority of them as “food self-sufficiency” (BE, RU, KZ, TM, UZ). For implementing such an approach the countries have developed legislation, including laws (KG, TJ, RU, BE) and strategies for their implementation (BE, KZ, KG, RU, TJ, TM, and UZ). The main policies encouraged to reach food independence are to support producers through subsidies for agricultural inputs, including seeds, fertilizers, plant protection agents, fuel, and machinery services. In all of these countries there is also limited support for consumers in the form of price regulation on bread (KG, TJ, UZ, TM) or on a variety of staple products, so called “social products” (BE, RU, KZ, TM).

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<sup>6</sup> The Concept of National Food Security, Belarus, 10.03.2004; Kyrgyzstan: Food Security Law, No 175, 30.07.2009; National Strategy of Kyrgyzstan on Sustainable Development up to 2017, Food Security Strategy of Kyrgyzstan up to 2017; Russia: The Doctrine on Food Security of the Russian Federation, 30 December 2012; The State Program on Agricultural Development and Agrarian Markets for 2013-2020, 14.07.2012; Kazakhstan's Food Security Law, 2005; Grain Law 2009, Strategy KZ-2050, address by the President, 14.12.2012; Tajikistan: Food Security Program, doc. #72, 02.02.2009, The Law on Food Security Law on FS, # 192, 13.10.2012, The Concept On Agrarian Policy, 31.12.2008.

Though government policies in these countries focus on food self-sufficiency, there are certainly differences in the level and instruments used for attaining self-sufficiency. For example, the highest levels of state support are observed in Belarus and Russia, though with WTO accession the latter has been transforming its policies in order to decrease the level of trade-distorting measures in accordance with its WTO agricultural support commitments. Belarus, as a member of the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU), has committed itself to decrease its level of trade-distorting agricultural subsidies to a level of 10% of the value of agricultural production. Kazakhstan, as a member of the same organization, also has committed itself to limit support at 10% of the value of agricultural production, while its seed and food subsidies are delivered primarily through the State Agro Corporation and locally managed food price control. The Member States of the Eurasian Economic Union (AR, BE, KZ, RU) rely on a relatively high common tariff policy (based on Russian tariff rates) vis-à-vis third countries to protect agriculture while liberalizing trade within the Union.

Despite dismantling the centrally planned system last century, some of the post-Soviet countries in the “food self-sufficiency” group use a state commodity order system to exert government control over the sowing and procurement of “strategic commodities,” and “directive indicators” encouraging production of certain agricultural products, mainly wheat and cotton in the countries of Central Asia. In Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and, to some extent, Belarus state support is delivered in the form of state-supplied inputs at discounted prices only to farms fulfilling state orders.

The example of Uzbekistan in this “food self-sufficiency” group shows some of the drawbacks of self-sufficiency policies. With the aim of establishing wheat self-sufficiency, Uzbekistan increased its area dedicated to wheat by 196 percent between 1991 and 2006.

More importantly, the country changed from dry land wheat cultivation practices to production on irrigated land. This policy enabled higher yields (wheat yields on irrigated land are nearly always higher than on dry land) and thus higher levels of production of wheat and flour. However, it has also led to a diversion of irrigation water away from high-value fruits and vegetables to wheat, a relatively low-value crop.

The second group of post-Soviet countries bases its vision of food security on improving food availability through technical support to farms, improving access to food by the poor and ensuring a higher quality diet without the use of food self-sufficiency targets. These countries generally follow the FAO approach to food security, as outlined in the World Food Summit Plan of Action, which can be characterized as “...when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life.” Five countries in the post-Soviet region (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine) have adopted policies that reflect this more inclusive vision of food security, with a focus on improving food availability and access, and improving food safety and the nutritional state of the population.

Armenia adopted a Food Security Law on 5 June 2002 (no. 3P-338)<sup>7</sup> which sets out the main directions for food security policies in that country: motivation for food production, development of food safety measures and macroeconomic stability. In addition, school feeding and fortification programs have been implemented in the last four years, and are supported by the Government and the donor community.

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<sup>7</sup> Food security Law of Armenia, adopted 22 June 2002.

Azerbaijan<sup>8</sup> is the only country in this group that includes self-sufficiency in grain production as an element of food security policies. Outside of the grain sector government policies are designed to ensure a reliable and stable food supply through a combination of domestic production and import as essential for food security and social development. The State Programme of the Republic of Azerbaijan on Poverty Reduction and Economic Development for the period of 2003-2005, State Program on development of small and medium enterprises in the Republic of Azerbaijan (2002-2005), the Socio-economic development of the regions of the Republic of Azerbaijan Program (2004-2008) and other documents, call for the provision of financial and technical support to farmers for increasing domestic production of food with the understanding that some food will be imported. The socio-economic development program in the Republic of Azerbaijan in 2008-2015 aimed at ensuring food security and employment in the country through support to market agriculture, while abstaining from import restrictions under the guise of “import substitution” or food self-sufficiency policies.

In Georgia<sup>9</sup> the issue of food security is linked with the overall agriculture development strategy based on supporting the agricultural sector within a quite liberal trade environment. In March 2012 the Government of Georgia approved the Strategy for Agricultural Development for 2012-22. Under this strategy government support for agriculture increased substantially. The government embarked on systemic changes designed to support more production from farmers and agricultural entrepreneurs including a VAT exemption. The Agriculture Development Strategy for the period 2015-2020 and the law on Food Safety and Quality adopted in 2005 also follow the model of state support to agriculture and infrastructure investment to ensure food security in the country.

Moldovan<sup>10</sup> government documents on food security emphasize technical support to agricultural production as well as finding new markets for agricultural products, one of the focuses of Moldova’s overall development policy. The National Strategy for Sustainable Development of the Agro-Industrial Complex for 2008-2015 (Government Decision No. 282 of March 11, 2008) was aimed at improving food availability through technical support to agricultural producers as well as at promoting exports of Moldovan food products such as fruits, vegetables and wine. In keeping with this policy goal, complementary policy documents on improvement of food quality and safety were adopted as well, including a National Strategy for Food Safety of the Republic of Moldova, 2011–2015 (Government Decision No. 747 of October 3, 2011).

### ***Key challenges and the path ahead to ensuring food and nutrition security***

Food security policies of the post-Soviet region emphasize different priorities. Some focus more on “self-sufficiency” while others more on financial and technical support to producers, food quality, promotion of exports and infrastructure improvement. However, there is comparatively little attention paid to policies to encourage a balanced and healthy diet rich in fruits and vegetables in order to reduce the risk of overweight, obesity and consequent non-contagious diseases such as heart and circulatory diseases and diabetes.

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<sup>8</sup> The State Programme on Socio-economic Development of the regions of Azerbaijan for 2009-2013”; “The State Program on Socio-economic Development of the Regions for 2004-2008-years.”

<sup>9</sup> The State Strategy on Agricultural Development of Georgia for 2012-22, Mar 2012; Law of Georgia on Food Safety, No 173, December 2005.

<sup>10</sup> The National Strategy for Sustainable Development of the Agro-Industrial Complex of Moldova for 2008–2015 (Government Decision No. 282 of March 11, 2008), the National Strategy for Food Safety of the Republic of Moldova, 2011–2015 (Government Decision No. 747 of October 3, 2011).

As emphasized previously, the problems of food insecurity in the region have changed away from that of caloric sufficiency toward the quality of people's diets, and will likely continue to evolve in this way. Therefore, it is essential that national or regional policies, strategies and programmes focus more earnestly on the quality of food consumed and dietary habits as some of the more pressing challenges faced by the region. The following guidelines support the formulation of food security policies in this direction.

- **Promote dietary and food production diversification:** dietary diversity deserves greater attention in almost all of Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia where micronutrient malnutrition, as well as overweight and obesity are serious burdens. Lower and middle income countries have much to gain from diversification of domestic agricultural production. This is particularly relevant in the case of fruit and vegetables and animal products, since these are key ingredients in a balanced strategy to ensure micronutrient intake sufficiency. Agricultural policies that improve incentives for agricultural diversification have the potential to enhance nutrition.<sup>11</sup>
- **Enhance nutrition education:** The main goal of nutrition education is to inform people as to what constitutes a healthy, balanced diet, as well as how to improve their diet and lifestyle. Interventions aimed at children in schools are widespread throughout the European Union (EU). At present nutrition education is not compulsory in most non-EU countries, except the Russian Federation, though in most countries there is some level of nutrition education for children. Nutrition education is vital for informed choice and should be a compulsory component of the school curriculum in all countries. Consumer policies and appropriate nutrition labelling, which enable consumers to make informed decisions, should be further developed as well.

- **Public health information campaigns:** Along with nutrition education in schools, public health information campaigns are the most common type of nutrition intervention employed in high income countries to promote healthy eating. As middle and low income countries in this region experience more problems of overweight and obesity and the non-contagious diseases that accompany them, they need to adopt strategies to combat these problems. As suggested by SOFA 2013 (FAO, 2013), a particular educational target should be mothers of young children, promoting prenatal balanced diets and postnatal feeding practices, as well as family nutrition needs. As the parent most responsible for household nutrition and child care, women, particularly young women, are an important target for nutrition education.

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<sup>11</sup> Agri-Food Systems for Better nutrition in Europe and Central Asia [http://www.fao.org/fileadmin/user\\_upload/Europe/documents/Publications/Policy\\_Studies/AgriFoodSys\\_en.pdf](http://www.fao.org/fileadmin/user_upload/Europe/documents/Publications/Policy_Studies/AgriFoodSys_en.pdf)

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