Millennium Development Goals:

THE REGION HAS ACHIEVED THE HUNGER TARGET
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The region has achieved the hunger target.
An example for the world

Latin America and the Caribbean has become a world leader in the fight against hunger. Not only is it the only region of the world that has achieved the hunger target of the Millennium Development Goals (goal 1C of the MDGs), reducing to less than half its proportion of undernourished people since 1990, but it is also the single region still on track to reach the more ambitious goal of the World Food Summit (WFS), which aims to halve the total number of people who suffer hunger in the region, a clear demonstration of the priority that it has given to the fight against hunger.

Regional achievements are not due to chance or mere economic development. They arise from an express decision to adopt the fight against hunger as a political commitment at the highest level, supported, embraced and backed by the whole of society. This commitment took shape almost ten years ago, when the then presidents of Brazil and Guatemala, Luís Inácio "Lula" da Silva and Oscar Berger, proposed the creation of the Hunger Free Latin America and the Caribbean 2025 Initiative (HFLACI), which was adopted by the thirty-three countries of the region and approved by the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States, CELAC.

The example of our region has inspired others: in 2014 Africa assumed a similar commitment to that of the HFLACI, pledging to eradicate hunger by the year 2025. This initiative reinforces the global call to end hunger with the combined force of both regions, which include 90 countries and more than 1.7 billion people. Given that the international community is discussing the work priorities for the post-2015 development agenda, this is a very strong signal, since it introduces a new approach in the fight against hunger, an approach that no longer simply seeks to reduce the number or proportion of undernourished: it calls for its eradication.

Hunger is a complex problem and there is no universal recipe for its eradication. Each country has to choose its own path. However, the positive experiences of Latin America and the Caribbean suggest that there are a number of common factors that serve as a roadmap: i) the political commitment of governments, ii) the mobilization of the whole of society, iii) a holistic approach that combines the strengthening of social protection systems with measures to support production, especially of family farming; and iv) the development and strengthening of legal frameworks to consolidate progress and provide adequate budgets and resources to the fight against hunger, resulting from the active involvement of the region’s legislators and parliamentarians.

Global and regional progress should not cause us to lower our guard. Although the region has taken a giant step ahead by achieving the hunger target of the MDGs, there are still 37 million people in the region who suffer hunger, so we must redouble our efforts. Besides malnutrition due to a lack of food intake, there is malnutrition due to excess food intake, something that has become a growing concern in the region. Overweight affects 23% of the adult population, while many countries in the region now face a double burden: hunger and overweight.

Eradicating both hunger and malnutrition is a commitment that requires the concerted effort of everyone, including governments, civil society, the private sector,
academia, producers and parliamentarians. In recent years we have seen how this approach has evolved from a shared dream into a concrete action agenda at the highest level, materialized in initiatives such as the Program for the Eradication of Hunger and Poverty of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States, CELAC, a sign that the region will try to maintain its leadership in the reduction of undernourishment in the coming years. FAO has supported the region’s efforts for decades, and will continue to offer its international expertise and technical assistance so that the region can reach the goal of the Zero Hunger Challenge: that no child, woman or man should have to live with hunger in all of Latin America and the Caribbean.

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INTRODUCTION

The main message of this year’s Panorama of Food and Nutritional Security is that Latin America and the Caribbean met –before the deadline of 2015- the 1C hunger reduction target of the Millennium Development Goals of the United Nations, thanks to the political commitment demonstrated by all countries in the region. None of this would have been possible in the absence of a context of macroeconomic and political stability, which has allowed the region to consolidate its development during recent years.

The region has shown a positive trend in the reduction of undernourishment since 1990, as can be seen by closely scrutinizing all of the dimensions of food and nutritional security.

The region produces enough food to feed its entire population, which represents a significant achievement in terms of food availability; it has also achieved successive reductions of poverty and inequality, which has consolidated food access at country level. Furthermore, malnutrition from deficient food intake has been progressively reduced due to improved food utilization.

Despite this positive outlook, there are still major challenges that, if addressed, will enable the region to improve the economic and social development of its peoples. The most important challenge is that 37 million still suffer hunger. Although countries have enough food to meet their dietary needs, their supply comes from different sources, depending on the particular situation of each of them. In practice, this means that while some countries are surplus food producers, others rely on imports to ensure their food availability, which involves risks from potential food crises or sudden increases in the price of food products.

In terms of food access, while poverty has been declining in recent years, the pace of decline has slowed. Even more serious if the fact that, according to the latest available estimates, there has been a slight increase in the number of people who live in extreme poverty, which represents a significant risk to food and nutritional security if one takes into account that food prices are at a higher level than the historical average, even though they are far from the levels seen during the crisis of 2007 and 2008. The increase in the rates of obesity represents an emerging challenge which is gathering importance in the public agenda, while food waste can become a serious threat to food stability.

We hope that the in-depth analysis that the Panorama 2014 provides regarding all areas relating to food and nutritional security will contribute to the regional debate on this matter, highlighting the main conclusion of this document: Latin America and the Caribbean is marching decidedly towards the eradication of hunger.

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A year before the deadline for meeting the Millennium Development Goals the region has achieved the goal of halving its proportion of people affected by hunger

Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) has -as a whole- achieved the 1C goal of the first MDG: halving the prevalence (%) of hunger in the region. From 1990-1992 to the present day, the prevalence (%) of hunger has been reduced by 9.2 percentage points, from 15.3% down to 6.1% (see Figure 1).

Despite this, 37 million people still suffer from hunger in the region (see Figure 2), i.e., they do not have sufficient means to access available food, or this food is not available in the necessary quantity and quality. In other words, 6.1% of the population of Latin America and the Caribbean suffers hunger on a daily basis. As was mentioned above, this represents a significant improvement on the 15.3% (68.5 million people) who suffered hunger in the 1990-1992 triennium, but still not enough to say that undernourishment has been eradicated. Thus, the fight against hunger remains an important issue, both for the world -where 805 million people still suffer from it- and for the region.

It should be noted that the food security situation differs widely among countries and subregions. Figure 3 shows that the region as a whole met the MDG goal, however, the Caribbean still has not reduced its prevalence of hunger at the same rate to meet the MDG.

Figure 1. Prevalence (%) of hunger in Latin America and the Caribbean, different periods

![Figure 1](chart1.png)


Figure 2. Hunger (millions of people) in the world and in Latin America and the Caribbean, different periods

![Figure 2](chart2.png)


1/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).
Figure 3 also shows an important turning point in the history of the fight against hunger in Latin America: this subregion has achieved —simultaneously and before the agreed upon date— both the 1C goal of the MDG hunger target, and the goal set by the World Food Summit (WFS²), of halving the total number of people affected by hunger.

This has only been achieved by Latin America so far, but the region as a whole can still meet the goal of the WFS, since it has already progressed 92% towards that goal.

**Figure 3.** Percentage (%) of compliance (progress status) towards the goals of the WFS and the hunger goal of the MDGs, worldwide and in Latin America and the Caribbean, 2014

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²/Reduce by 50% the number of people who suffer hunger, between 1990 and 2015. This is more demanding than the MDG goal, since it involves halving the absolute number of hungry people, and not just the prevalence (%), as is the case with the 1c goal of the MDG.
Latin America and the Caribbean has enough food to meet the needs of their entire populations

During the past two decades the overall production and food availability of the region has increased above the rate of consumption and population growth, which consequently has resulted in an increase in the per capita availability of food, which exceeds the minimum food requirements of the region’s population.

As shown in Figure 4, global food availability today is 11% higher than during the 1990-1992 triennium, reaching 2,881 calories per day per person, exceeding by 56% the average minimum calorie requirements.

In this regard, the progress seen in Latin America and the Caribbean is evident. In the early '90s, food availability in all countries except Haiti exceeded the minimum requirements by relatively narrow margins. Currently, all 33 countries in the region without exception have enough food to meet the minimum energy requirements of their populations: in the region, the supply of available calories in the 2012-14 triennium is 3,010 calories, an increase of 13% when compared to the 1990-92 triennium, a higher rate of growth than has been seen in the rest of the world.

Figure 4. Food availability (kcal/person/day) in Latin America and the Caribbean, by sub-regions and global figures, 1990-92, 2001-03 and 2012-14

Intraregional trade in surplus region: a mechanism for enhancing food and nutritional security in Latin America and the Caribbean

The current favorable situation in terms of food availability has also resulted in the increasing importance of agricultural trade in Latin America and the Caribbean. Since 2005 exports have exceeded imports by far, a sign of the export potential of the region (see Figure 5). The value of regional agricultural exports have more than doubled the value of its agricultural imports, even during 2009, a year in which trade flows showed a significant reduction.

**Figure 5.** Evolution of agricultural trade in Latin America and the Caribbean, 2005-2013 (millions of dollars)

One of the largest trading partners of Latin America and the Caribbean is the region itself, as can be seen in Figure 6. The aggregate agricultural trade flows between countries of the region were close to US $36 billion dollars, accounting for 39.9% of regional imports and 16.2% of exports in 2013. These figures suggest that the region remains an important agricultural trading partner for its own countries.

**Figure 6.** Origin and destination [percentages (%) of value] of agricultural trade in Latin America and the Caribbean, 2013

Source: FAO Regional Office with information from Global Trade Atlas (online).

Note: Due to rounding of figures, the total might not add up to 100%.
An examination of the marketed product shows that, during 2013, 56% of total maize imports in LAC came from the region, while for soybeans this proportion was 39%, 88% for sugar, and 80% for oil. This shows the capacity for intraregional food supply of certain commodities, the potential of which is evident when analyzing the trade balance of each country’s commerce in terms of some commodities: countries with a trade surplus can be potential suppliers for countries who have deficits in terms of their food production.
Poverty and indigence in the region have fallen in the past decades, but in recent years this reduction shows signs of stagnation which can threaten the progress in food and nutritional security.

Just as with hunger, poverty and extreme poverty have presented similar reduction trends in the region and its countries. The prevalence of people living in poverty has declined steadily, and since 2002 this decline has also been seen with regard to the absolute number of people suffering poverty. However, the pace of the decline has slowed in recent years (see Figure 7). The important relationship between extreme poverty and food and nutritional insecurity in the region should be kept in mind.

In 2013, poverty affected 164 million people, equivalent to 27.9% of the population of the region. This represents a stabilization of poverty in terms of the total number of people and a slight reduction in terms of percentage down from 28.2% in 2012. However, in the case of extreme poverty, there has been an increase both in the total number and percentage: indigence affected 68 million people in Latin America in 2013, two million more than in the previous year. Similarly, the percentage of people affected by extreme poverty rose by 0.2 percentage points over the past year, to 11.5%.

We should note the implications of this change in the composition of poverty: while the number of people in poverty remains relatively constant, within this group there is a higher proportion of people in extreme poverty. Considering that the poverty measurement used in this publication is based on the cost of the basic food basket of each country, the increase in extreme poverty means an increasing the number of people in the region whose income does not cover the cost of this basket, and therefore, have a risk of falling into food insecurity.


Figure 7. Poverty [rate (%) and millions of people] in Latin America, selected years
Increases in regional food inflation during the last year and persistent inequality continue to be risks, but have gradually declined

Recently, there has been a slight downward trend in international food prices, but their level is still located well above the averages that existed before the food crisis of 2007-2008.

Figure 8 shows that, by extending the period of comparison, a new base price for food becomes evident, well above what characterized the beginning of the decade of 2000. Indeed, since the end of that decade, food prices have experienced a clear upward trend and have become increasingly volatile.

**Figure 8.** Evolution of the FAO Food Price Index (base 2002-2004 = 100), 2000-2014

Hikes in food prices have a direct impact on the welfare of families, reducing their purchasing power and thus affecting both the quantity and quality of food that households enjoy. Most people’s main source of income are wages or cash transfers, and therefore are net buyers of food. Therefore, the increase in food prices directly affects food and nutritional security, something that is especially true for the poorest households, as they spend a larger proportion of their income on food. While families with higher socioeconomic status may reduce their expenditures in other areas to keep their diet stable, the poorest cannot, and thereby are affected by rising food prices, with the consequential impact on the health and nutrition of their families.

Regional food and headline inflation have increased in the last year. Figure 9 shows that, since the sharp decline in food inflation seen during the second half of 2008, from 2010 onwards food inflation has tended to rise. Even though current food inflation is at one of the highest recorded levels since mid-2007, it is still far from the peaks reached during the food price crisis.

**Figure 9.** Evolution of the rate (%) of annual inflation in Latin America and the Caribbean

**Source:** FAO Regional Office, from country information.

Note: a/ Average of 10 LAC countries representing around 95% of regional GDP. The countries included are: Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Mexico, Peru, Venezuela (RB).
Moreover, even though inequality remains at high levels in the region, there has been a downward trend, which, as shown in Figure 10, is manifested in a steady decline in the Gini index of Latin America since the early 2000s. However, the region remains one of the most unequal in the world.

**Figure 10.** Evolution of the Gini Index in Latin America, different periods

Source: FAO Regional Office with data from ECLAC (online).

Undernourishment, overweight and obesity have a greater impact on the most vulnerable: the fight against malnutrition and poverty are complementary

The lower incomes of the most vulnerable populations limit their ability to purchase food. Considering that the poor also have less access to health services, they face a scenario which results in an inadequate utilization of food, favoring the emergence of malnutrition.

The flipside of malnutrition—obesity—can no longer be regarded as a phenomenon that only occurs in higher income groups. Indeed, it has been observed that in several developing countries obesity is more common in the most vulnerable socio-economic groups, whereas in many developed and middle-income countries the consumption of unhealthy foods is significantly correlated with low income levels and low educational attainment.

As can be seen in Figure 11, the regional situation regarding undernourishment has evolved positively, exhibiting a general downward trend. In contrast, there has been an increase in overweight and obesity in children under 5 years of age. Thus, Figure 12 shows that, of the 19 countries analyzed, 11 of them have increased their prevalence of overweight.

These twin faces of malnutrition entail high economic and social costs that affect all countries, regardless of their income level. However, the preponderance of malnutrition in vulnerable populations makes this phenomenon both a cause and a consequence of poverty and inequality, which indicates a vicious circle. In this regard, the governments of the region are facing a problem that requires the highest commitment, since they must not only use traditional health care to eradicate them, but also employs measures that go beyond simple health care.

The importance of taking into consideration food prices, poverty and inequality in income distribution, among other things, is due to the fact that these are the factors that primarily determine the existence of hunger in the region. As noted, regardless of how they are acquired, there is enough food to feed the entire population of the region. Despite this, there are still areas and remote locations that face food insecurity and that do not participating fully in the benefits of economic growth and wealth generation.
Figure 11. Evolution [percentages (%)] of chronic undernourishment (stunting) in children under 5 years of age (both sexes) in Latin America and the Caribbean, different periods

Source: WHO (online).

Figura 12. Evolution [percentages (%)] of overweight in children under 5 years (both sexes), Latin America and the Caribbean, different periods

Source: WHO (online).
Food waste and losses are a threat to the region's food supply, but mitigating them means a significant opportunity to reduce hunger in the region

“Food waste and losses” refer to the decrease in mass of food for human consumption at any point in the supply chain. In particular, "losses" are defined as those that occur in the stages of production, post-harvest and processing; while conceptually "waste" corresponds to the declines that occur at the end of the supply chain, particularly in the phases of distribution and consumption.

According to the World Bank (2014), between a quarter and a third of food produced for human consumption annually worldwide is lost or wasted. FAO (2014), meanwhile, estimated that 6% of global food losses occur in Latin America. This subregion loses or wastes around 15% of its available food, which could feed 300 million people.

During the 2012/14 triennium, just at the level of retail, the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean wasted between 3% and 4.2% of their available calories. Moreover, in the absence of food waste in Latin America and the Caribbean, 10 countries in the region would join the 14 that have already met the 1C target of the MDGs.

Political commitment in a context of stability: the keys to the region’s success in reducing hunger

During the past two decades, the reduction of hunger and malnutrition has been adopted as a top global development goal in the international political agenda. Latin America and the Caribbean has not been indifferent to this trend, on the contrary, hunger eradication has great priority on the political agenda of countries and of the region as a whole, which has led to advances that have made Latin America and the Caribbean a world class leader in the field of food and nutritional security.

Already in 2005 the region became a pioneer by proposing to eradicate hunger by 2025, shaping the Hunger Free Latin America and the Caribbean Initiative (HFLACI), a political commitment made by all countries in the region that has been adding members and which to this day gathers support and is promoted in high-level meetings. Additionally, the Santiago Declaration of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC, in Spanish) made in January 2013 (and endorsed in January 2014 at the Second Summit of CELAC held in Havana), led to the creation of an Action Plan of Public Policies on Social Matters, a framework within which FAO was requested to prepare a draft Action Plan for Food Security, Nutrition and Hunger and Poverty Eradication, with the support of ECLAC and the Latin American Integration Association. Meanwhile, The Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America-Treaty of Commerce of the People (ALBA-TCP) and Petrocaribe adopted the Hugo Chavez Action Plan for the Eradication of Hunger and Poverty.

Based on these experiences, other sub-regional integration bodies such as the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR), the Central American Integration System (SICA), the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), the Community of Andean Nations (CAN) and the Southern Common Market (MERCOSUR) are working on strategies and action plans to address food and nutritional security from a supranational perspective, based on the common realities of their countries and adapting these strategies to the different contexts and problems of food insecurity, to responding to their causal relations.

These high level discussions and agreements have created a renewed regional political commitment to eradicate hunger. This, in turn, has made countries adopt a more comprehensive and holistic approach towards hunger eradication.
A new approach to the eradication of hunger

For decades, food and nutritional security was understood as an achievement that rested solely on technical aspects, especially in terms of agriculture. It was assumed that food and nutritional security depended merely on the existence of sufficient food to meet the needs of the population. Over the years this approach has changed into the current scheme of food and nutritional security.

This paradigm shift was not initially reflected in the way that States addressed the problem of hunger, which maintained their technical, compartmentalized, sector driven approach, where food availability was the exclusive competence of agriculture, food access was left in charge of the (then emergent) area of social development, while the health sector accounted for food utilization, and so on.

When the problem of hunger was placed firmly in the public agenda, the approach taken on by government took a different shape, moving from the technical to the political. This did imply the disappearance of technical criteria, but rather their strategic adaptation to comprehensive political goals at the highest national level. This created a new approach for the consolidation of food and nutritional security, also called the “political approach” which can be summarized by the following characteristics:

Greater institutional dimensions in the design of public policies. Once food and nutritional security was firmly installed within the public agenda, the discussion process, implementation and evaluation of policies relating to this area of concern exceed the traditional scope of its technical content (policies). This greatly enriched the process of policy formation with discussions related to the institutional framework that governs the relationship between the state and society, wherein lie the chances of developing sustainable answers in the form of public instruments (polity). This new approach also took into account the nature of political activity to position food and nutritional security on the decision making agenda, which permitted the formation of a public consensus that would enable the sustainable implementation of intervention strategies (Beduschi et al., 2014).

In practice, this should lead to the creation of institutional spaces that lend weight and sustainability to public policies, as well as laws that underpin these policies and allow them to be carried out continuously, independent from the changes brought on by the change in governments.

Integral, inter-sector extended governance. Establishing hunger as a problem that includes the technical aspect but also exceeds its scope means that to assign the responsibility of facing this problem to a single sector makes no sense in terms of establishing a comprehensive set of public policies; thus a shift in focus is evident both in the content and implementation of hunger eradication policies. The creation of multi-sector strategies to address malnutrition as a complex problem - which concerns several sectors of the State, society and the market - became the first concrete expression of a new form of tackling hunger reduction that avoided compartmentalization. This new approach is characterized by inter-institutional coordination, multidisciplinary analysis, respect for the characteristics of the different segments of the population and their life cycle, and multi-sector policy implementation.

The involvement of the executive power and of all actors that shape public policy - namely, the legislature, civil society and the private sector - is one of the concrete manifestations and distinguishing features that characterize the political environment of Latin America and the Caribbean. Thus, the responsibility for ensuring food and nutritional security falls on the society as whole, rather than having it depend on isolated individual actors without horizontal or vertical integration.
Short and long term policies, the “twin track” approach. A third distinctive feature is the integrated implementation of a wide range of policies –that differ in terms of their scope and/or content- in order to eradicate hunger. This model, dubbed as “twin track approach” by Stamoulis and Zezza (2003), involves the implementation of short-term measures by way of social protection systems to address the immediate needs of those suffering hunger and malnutrition, while at the same time implementing long-term policies that promote economic growth, ensure the availability of food and strengthen the capacities of the most vulnerable populations, to provide long-term sustainability to food and nutritional security.

Four strategic areas of policy for food and nutritional security in Latin America and the Caribbean

The implementation of policies in the context of this new approach can be seen primarily, although not exclusively, in four major strategic policy areas in which the region has focused its efforts, which address all dimensions of food and nutritional security in response both to emergency needs and to the underlying causes of hunger: (1) Comprehensive policies and strategies for food and nutritional security (FSN); (2) Strengthening of family farming; (3) Combating poverty and extreme poverty, particularly in rural areas; (4) Intra-regional and domestic trade for food and nutritional security.

Comprehensive policies and strategies for FSN. Since the decade of 2000, both FSN and the human right to food (HRF) have maintained an ongoing consolidation process, manifested in the growing number of legal bodies and institutions dedicated to these subjects. In fact, currently at least 15 countries in the region have explicitly recognized the human right to food in their constitutions, while 7 countries have enacted framework laws for food and nutritional security.

Along with the legal and institutional consolidation, mechanisms for inclusive governance have been established, with inter-institutional coordination being particularly important as well as the participation of civil society and the private sector in the discussions and decisions at the highest level, giving greater legitimacy to policies and strategies that address FSN in each country.

These policies and strategies, which are currently implemented by 18 countries of the region3, provide a framework for joint action to develop specific programs that address the four dimensions of FSN, focusing on overcoming poverty and inequality (the dimension of access to food) and the nutritional status of the population (the dimension of food utilization).

Strengthening of family farming. Family farming is particularly important in Latin America and the Caribbean given the role it plays in the production of food and its relationship with rural areas. However, at the same time, family farmers face great challenges that make the sector a priority for public policies: the majority of family farmers in the region have limited productive resources and are socioeconomically vulnerable.

In terms of legal frameworks and institutions, this has meant the establishment of bodies within the state structures especially dedicated to family farming. Two LAC countries have special ministries for this sector, while most of the countries of Central and South America have ad hoc institutions at the vice-ministerial level or in public services. However, institutionally, the promotion of this sector is usually associated with other policy areas, most notably rural development, food and nutritional security and access to land.

It is important to note that the consolidation of family farming on the political agenda has resulted, mainly, in the establishment of policies and programs for this

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3/In seven other countries they are being either designed or approved.
sector, providing technical assistance, integration to markets, inputs and finance. One of the most innovative approaches in this area has been the inclusion of family agriculture in the inter-sector policy frameworks. The clearest example is the preferential inclusion of family farming products in public procurement programs, which are then used to improve the quality of school meals.

**Fighting poverty and extreme poverty, particularly in rural areas.** During the last decade, poverty and extreme poverty have declined steadily in the region. In rural areas, meanwhile, while the decrease in poverty is encouraging, in 2012 the proportion of people in extreme poverty living in rural areas was four times greater than in urban areas, which indicates that countries should redouble their efforts to improve the living conditions in rural areas so as to continue to progress in the eradicating of hunger.

Given their characteristics, the institutional approach to rural areas has traditionally been handled by the ministries of agricultural and social development, which have dealt with production stimulus and social protection, respectively, while the regulation of the labour market has become increasingly important. Additionally, the participation of rural people in instances of program coordination has been strengthened, usually in the form of councils, often with a significant territorial component.

In terms of public assistance, initiatives such as the Conditional Cash Transfer Programs (PTC), welfare pensions and policies relating to the labour market play an important role in poverty eradication. Many of these initiatives, even if they are not focused solely on rural areas, have particular relevance to the inhabitants of these regions. Countries in the region have begun to implement specialized programs in rural areas, both in the form of non-contributory pensions and labour programs. The latter may be particularly important in the future, given the increasing presence of salaried workers in these areas.

**Intraregional and domestic trade for food and nutritional security.** In terms of agricultural trade, the region has become one of the mayor commercial partners for its own countries in terms of agricultural trade, a fact which showcases the importance of intra-regional trade and the great potential that the region has as a supplier of food and other agricultural products. Domestic trade is key to ensuring an adequate food supply, and several countries in the region have establish specialized institutions focused on this, which are responsible for conducting public procurements of agricultural products, maintaining food reserves in case of food shortages or selling products when prices are high. In all these cases, the role that the state can maintain in facilitating food trade is very important, especially when public instruments are implemented in order to optimize the operation of the food market chains.

In the past two decades several forums for dialogue and coordination concerned with creating more integrated commercial systems have been created in Latin America and the Caribbean. Currently, political instances such as the Latin American Integration Association (ALADI), the Central American Integration System (SICA), the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), the Southern Common Market (MERCOSUR), the Community of Andean Nations (CAN) and the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America-Treaty of Commerce of the People (ALBA-TCP) have expressed their interest in promoting food and nutritional security. Public instruments related to domestic trade are diverse and respond to the socio-political situations of each country. Among them, procurement policies which intend to generate equal market conditions stand out, which in general have resulted in the construction of public works, the promotion of the direct sale of agricultural products between farmers and consumers, and the establishment of state supply chains that benefit the most vulnerable populations stand out.
Indigenous peoples and rural women are a priority to strengthen food and nutritional security

In general, indigenous peoples harbor the greatest diversity and genetic wealth of natural resources in their territories, which not only explains the survival of their communities, but has been the basis of food systems in modern societies around the world. Paradoxically, their food insecurity levels - in the countries for which data is available - are higher than those of the non-indigenous population (see Figure 13).

While global chronic undernourishment decreased since the beginning of the decade of 2000 in the countries analyzed in Figure 13, the rate of decline is lower for indigenous populations. Because of environmental degradation, pollution of traditional ecosystems, the loss of their lands and territories and the decline of their traditional sources of food or of their access to them, malnutrition is one of the most important problems for the indigenous populations and, in turn, is both cause and effect of many of the structural difficulties they face.

Rural women are another key demographic in the fight against hunger: they play a key role in household nutrition in rural areas. While men are mainly engaged in working crops in the field, women are often not only responsible for agricultural labour but also prepare most of the food consumed in their homes, in addition to raising small livestock to provide protein. Similarly, in their role as managers of their household’s resources, women spend a significant portion of their income on food and the needs of their children.

Unfortunately, the importance that women have in strengthening food and nutritional security in rural areas is not consistent with their situation, since twice

Figure 13. Changes in the status of chronic undernourishment and global undernourishment [percentages (%)], of indigenous peoples in selected countries, different periods

![Graph showing changes in chronic and global undernourishment]

Source: FAO Regional Office based on information from ECLAC: Latin American Business Development Center (2014).
as many women than men suffer undernourishment in these areas, while overweight and obesity tend to be more common in women than in men4.

The income of rural women also reflects this unequal situation. As can be seen in Figure 14, in Latin America 40% of rural women over 15 years of age lack their own income, with prevalence ranging from 21% in Uruguay to 73% in Nicaragua.

The contribution of women to the rural economy is, thus, minimized, even when statistics have shown their increasing participation in subsistence agricultural production (see Table 1).

Thus, despite the fundamental contributions that women and indigenous people make to food and nutritional security, both regionally and nationally, their situation merits focused attention by States in the region. The benefits of improving their living conditions can result in better food and nutritional security, both for these particular groups and the communities in which they live. Therefore, the full inclusion and recognition of indigenous people and women in our society is ultimately a benefit to all.

Table 1. Rate of participation (%) in subsistence farming activities by sex in selected countries, around 2010

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Women</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ecuador</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>60,9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guatemala</td>
<td>31,1</td>
<td>47,6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>México</td>
<td>47,0</td>
<td>48,4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Time use surveys in Ecuador, Guatemala and Mexico elaboration.

Figure 14. Percentage (%) of rural women older than 15 without income in Latin America and the Caribbean, around 2010

Source: FAO Regional Office based on special tabulations from National Agricultural Census.

4/It is estimated that globally 60% of adults who are obese are women.
Se estima que a nivel mundial el 60% de los adultos que presentan obesidad son mujeres.