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2015

State of Food Insecurity in the **CARICOM Caribbean**



Executive Summary

STATE OF FOOD INSECURITY IN THE CARICOM CARIBBEAN

Executive Summary

Meeting the 2015 hunger targets: Taking stock of uneven progress

Subregional Office for the Caribbean
Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
Bridgetown, 2015

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Introduction



The State of Food Insecurity in the CARICOM Caribbean¹ 2015 is being published in an important year. The year 2015 is when the food security performance of countries across the world is being evaluated against the commitments made at the 1996 World Food Summit (WFS) and 2000 Millennium Development Summit.

The 1996 World Food Summit, attended by 185 countries plus the European Community, pledged to achieve a measurable goal - "to eradicate hunger in all countries, with an immediate view to reducing the number of undernourished people to half their present level no later than 2015". Four years later, the Millennium Summit, held in New York in September 2000 adopted a Millennium Declaration with eight

1 References to the Caribbean in the document refer to the Caribbean Community countries: Antigua and Barbuda, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Trinidad and Tobago, Suriname.

Millennium Development Goals (MDG) under which MDG 1 committed to a hunger target to halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people who suffer from hunger².

While the State of Food Insecurity in the CARICOM Caribbean 2015 presents the performance of CARICOM countries in the context of these ambitious goals, it is well recognized that food and nutrition security is about much more than the supply of dietary energy. This report therefore presents the overview of food and nutrition security from the standpoint of what FAO classifies as the four pillars of food security – food availability, food accessibility, food utilization and stability. Further, a more institutional and longer view is taken in the report with the consideration of factors such as governance and rights that are important to promoting the sustained achievement of food and nutrition security.

Despite their generally classified high and upper-middle income status (with the exception of Haiti and Guyana), the food and nutrition security report card for the CARICOM countries is mixed. In terms of undernourishment, it can be concluded that the CARICOM countries consume more calories per day than required, with the exception of Haiti. Food availability is increasingly derived from imports and this is considered a problem from at least three standpoints: food import dependence, loss of foreign exchange and increased consumption of processed foods.

2 FAO defines hunger as being synonymous with undernourishment and it is measured by food deprivation as reflected in the level of intake of dietary energy.

Given the income classification of the majority of CARICOM countries, one would conclude that accessibility

should not be a problem. However, high levels of income inequality and unemployment result in a high proportion (greater than 20%) of the population living below the national poverty line in ten of the countries.

Food utilization is of course affected by capacity to purchase, food choices and food preparation. High priced quality food (fresh fruits and vegetables) is out of reach of the poor and unemployed. As a result, food choices of these groups often favour of inferior products (imported processed canned meats and fried foods) that contribute to the high levels of obesity and non-communicable diseases observed in the region.

From a stability standpoint, CARICOM's food and nutrition security can be described as precarious, given the Caribbean region's risk due to the high occurrence of tropical storms, floods, droughts and earthquakes. The spectre of climate change and its impacts undoubtedly adds to this risk.

CARICOM countries have approved a Regional Food and Nutrition Security Policy and Action Plan and in almost all the countries there now exists a national food and nutrition security policy and action plan. The lessons of successful policy implementation to improve food and nutrition security from countries across the globe are being promoted by FAO in the countries of

the CARICOM region. In three countries, a Zero Hunger Challenge Initiative action plan has been launched and one country has established a Parliamentary Front against Hunger. The particular conditions that characterize small, vulnerable states are not generally considered to favour a stable and sustainable food and nutrition security situation. Thus, achieving and maintaining high levels of food and nutrition security will remain a challenge. Good governance and partnerships, at the national, regional and global levels will be essential for success. FAO has been and will continue to be a partner to CARICOM in meeting the challenge.

J.R. Deep Ford

Coordinator - Caribbean Region
Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

Selected Economic Indicators of CARICOM Countries

CARICOM States	Pop. ('000) (2014-16) ¹	Area (km ²) (2014) ²	GDP (current prices) (US\$ M) (2013) ³	Average annual real GDP growth (%) (2012-14) ³ (2006=100)	Average per capita GDP (US\$) (current prices) (2010-14) ³	Average annual per capita GDP growth (current prices) (%) (2000-2013) ³	HDI rank (2014) ⁴	Trade openness (exports+ imports)/ GDP (%) (2012) ⁵
Larger island States								
Haiti	10 533	27 750	8 451	4.9	735	5.1	168**	66
Jamaica	2 806	10 830	14 196	0.6	4 950	3.1	96	80.8
Trinidad and Tobago	1 346	5 130	27 257	1.7	14 915	10.4	64	98.9
Smaller island States								
Antigua and Barbuda	92	440	1 201	2.1	12 723	2.4	61	107.1
The Bahamas	386	13 900	8 420	2.6	21 415	1.0	51	102.3
Barbados	286	430	4 281	0.5	15 411	2.3	59	96.8
Dominica	73	750	512	1.4	6 865	3.5	93	92.4
Grenada	107	340	836	0.2	7 220	3.5	79	71.0
St. Kitts and Nevis	55	260	744	1.4	13 128	2.8	73	75.5
St. Lucia	185	610	1 342	1.0	6 868	3.7	97	112.0
St. Vincent and the Grenadines	109	390	709	1.2	6 245	4.4	91	82.5
Mainland States								
Belize	344	22 810	1 624	3.4	4 345	2.6	84	136.3
Guyana	806	196 850	2 982	4.9	3 255	7.3	121*	142.7
Suriname	546	156 000	5 038	4.5	8 602	10.3	100	118.2
Total	17 674	436 490	67 841	2.2	7 044⁶			(Aver) 103.4

Source: ^{1,2,4} Available at: www.worldbank.com; ³ Available at: www.imf.org; ⁴The Human Development Index (HDI), ranks countries 1 to 187, where 1 is the highest rank. In this column, countries with an (**) are ranked low human development, those with an (*) are "Medium Human Development Index"; the other countries in this column are ranked "High Human Development Index). Available at: www.undp.org; 5IMF (2013); ⁶Median Income.



Key findings

- 1. CARICOM countries have made progress in reducing undernourishment and towards meeting the global hunger targets.** The number of undernourished persons in the Caribbean³ declined from 8.1 million in 1990-92, to 7.5 million in 2014-16. For the same period, the proportion of undernourished persons declined from 27 percent to 19.8 percent. Three Caribbean Community countries – Barbados, Guyana and St Vincent and the Grenadines – have met both global hunger targets, that of the World Food Summit (WFS) set in 1996 and the United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in 2000. Dominica, Bahamas, Belize, Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago all have undernourishment levels less than 10 percent of their population. The remaining countries have undernourishment levels between 10 and 20 percent, with the exception of Haiti that has extremely high levels of undernourishment at 50 percent of the population.
- 2. Haiti is a special case in CARICOM and its large population and high levels of underdevelopment skews average results when presented as part of CARICOM regional indicators.** Haiti accounts for 60 percent of CARICOM's population of 17.5 million, and approximately 90 percent of undernourished persons in the region. It is estimated that 53.4 percent of the Haitian population (5.7 million persons) are undernourished and 58.5 percent of Haitians (6.0 million persons), are absolutely poor (i.e. cannot meet their own basic food and non-food needs). In Haiti, more than 75 percent of persons in extreme poverty live in rural areas where 38 percent could not satisfy their nutritional needs. Another 1 million persons are vulnerable and could be pushed below the poverty line by a natural disaster or economic shock. Income inequality is high and has not improved over the past decade. Despite these challenges, Haiti has made some progress over the past decade.
- 3. Food energy availability in all CARICOM countries, except Haiti, exceeds the recommended population food energy guidelines.** In some countries such as Barbados and Dominica, calories consumed per capita exceed 3000. In all the other countries, with the exception of Haiti, calories consumed per capita are above 2400. In Haiti, the estimated average is about 2000. The excessive consumption of calories is particularly related to processed foods. Changes in diets in the region have contributed to CARICOM islands being ranked among the highest in the world in terms of obesity. Overweight and obesity are challenges that affect higher proportions of the population in CARICOM countries than undernourishment. Among persons in the above 15 year age group, female obesity rates in the region are several times that of their male counterparts. For example, in Haiti, obese females outnumber obese males 16:1, and in Jamaica and St Lucia the ratios are 6:1 and 4:1, respectively.
- 4. Food imports, as opposed to national food production, are by far the largest source of food for CARICOM populations.** CARICOM countries currently import in excess of US\$ 4 billion in food annually, an increase of

3 The data reported here are for CARICOM countries, the Dominican Republic and Cuba.

50 percent since 2000. Food imports are projected to increase to US \$8-10 billion by 2020 if current efforts are not successful in addressing this problem. Almost all CARICOM countries import more than 60 percent of the food they consume, with half of them importing more than 80 percent of the food they consume. Only three countries (Belize, Guyana, and Haiti) produce more than 50 percent of their consumption. Processed foods, grains (wheat and corn), and livestock products (meat and dairy) are among the top five food import categories, accounting for over US\$ 1 billion or approximately 25 percent of annual food imports regionally. In several essential food groups, national production per capita has declined, most notably in the fruits and vegetables category.

5. **Food access is a key food and nutrition security problem in the Caribbean.** It is linked to poverty, which has been increasing in several countries in the region. Seven of the CARICOM countries have more than 30 percent of their population falling below the national poverty levels. In the case of Haiti this number is estimated at 59 percent and as a result, about 40 percent of the region's population is considered poor. Further, almost all of the countries are characterized by high levels of income inequality. It is estimated that the consumption expenditure of the highest 10 percent of income earners averages 16.4 times more than that of the lowest 10 percent of income earners.
6. **Food utilization has been characterized by poor food choices.** A nutrition transition has taken place in the CARICOM region which has contributed to increased prevalence of chronic, non-communicable diseases (NCDs). Many of the food items that are being consumed reflect a shift away from domestic root crops, tubers, fruit and vegetables in favour of food that is low in nutrients, energy-dense and high in fats, oils, sweeteners and sodium. This nutrition transition drives the epidemiological transition, which is characterized less by infectious diseases and more by nutrition-related, chronic, non-communicable diseases (NCDs), i.e. diabetes (and its complications such as amputations and blindness), hypertension, stroke, heart-disease and some forms of cancer. Obesity is also a main risk-factor for NCDs and is linked to unhealthy diets and sedentary lifestyles.
7. **Instability and vulnerability caused by natural and economic shocks constantly undermine efforts to advance food and nutrition security in the region.** CARICOM countries are vulnerable to natural disasters, which cause extensive damage to property and loss of lives, undermine national efforts to enhance food security and to reduce poverty. Over the period 1990-2014, 182 major natural disasters occurred in the region, affecting 11.5 million persons, causing 241,550 deaths (over 200,000 of these deaths occurred in Haiti as a result of the 2010 earthquake) and US\$ 16.6 billion in damage to immovable assets and stock. Increased losses are related to the interruption to the flow of goods and services owing to the disruption of agriculture and food production systems. Building resilience is increasingly articulated as a major development goal. The food price crises of 2007 and 2008 and the ensuing global economic crisis resulted in increased numbers of persons fall-

ing into a state of food insecurity, due to reduced levels of remittances and quality food being priced beyond the reach of the poor.

- 8. Global mandates, international and regional cooperation agreements and partnerships have a role to play in reducing food security in the region.** In response to the 1996 World Food Summit calls to reduce global food insecurity, the Italian Government funded a major project across Caribbean and Pacific Small Island Developing States (SIDS) to increase food and nutrition security. The Hunger targets of the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) of 2000 and the Voluntary Guidelines for promoting the Right to Food (Rome, 2004) have also served to bring the attention of public policy makers to the need for addressing the issue of food security in the Caribbean. More recently, the UN Zero Hunger Initiative (Rio, 2012) has inspired the launch of several national Zero Hunger Initiatives throughout CARICOM countries.
- 9. Improved governance and public policy are critical to achieving improved food and nutrition security.** Improved governance enables effective integration, coordination and broad participation for improved decision-making and implementation of actions to increase food and nutrition security. Public policies are essential for the sustainable management of food systems and for ensuring adequate focus on social protection aspects of the food security challenge. Improved governance leading to the design and implementation of public purchasing policies, school feeding programmes, and early childhood nutrition programmes have demonstrated considerable food security gains in many countries.
- 10. Inclusive and pro-poor economic growth is needed to address poverty and high levels of unemployment in CARICOM countries.** In CARICOM countries, stagnant growth over the past two decades, together with high levels of unemployment, have led to decreased food security and increased poverty for many households, especially in rural areas. Unemployment is particularly high among youth, being in excess of 25 percent in ten of the fourteen CARICOM countries. As revitalization of the CARICOM economies is pursued, it is important that attention is paid to ensuring that pro-poor growth is achieved, recognizing that some of the highest rates of poverty and food insecurity in the region have occurred during periods of relatively high economic growth.

This document is an Executive Summary of the longer version of The **“State of Food insecurity in the CARICOM Caribbean 2015”** prepared by the FAO. It presents a summary of the current situation on undernourishment, food and nutrition security, and policies, programs and actions in place to advance food and nutrition security in CARICOM countries. The full version is available on the FAO website.

**NATIONAL
ZERO HUNGER CHALLENGE
INITIATIVE**



**EAT LOCAL!
BUY LOCAL!**

VERNMENT OF GRENADA



1. Undernourishment in the CARICOM Caribbean⁴

Undernourishment has declined in the Caribbean over the past 25 years as CARICOM countries have made progress towards meeting the global hunger targets. Current estimates indicate that the number of undernourished persons in the Caribbean declined from 8.1 million in 1990-92 to 7.5 million in 2014-16, a decrease of around 8 percent (Table 1). Haiti with a larger and poorer population than all other Caribbean countries is disproportionately represented. The number of people who are currently undernourished in Haiti is in excess of five million, which is 53 percent of the country's population and 90 percent of the region's undernourished, compared to 5 to 11 percent of the population of other CARICOM countries (Charts 1-2).

4 CARICOM Countries together with Dominican Republic and Cuba

Table 1. Number (millions) and prevalence (%) of undernourished people in the Caribbean

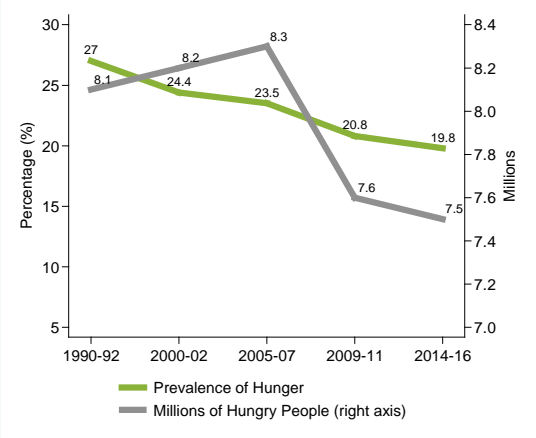
	Millions					Prevalence (%)				
	1990-92	2000-02	2005-07	2009-11	2011-16 ²	1990-92	2000-02	2005-07	2009-11	2011-16
Caribbean	8.1	8.2	8.3	7.6	7.5	27	24.4	23.5	20.8	19.8
Antigua and Barbuda	<0.1	<0.1	<0.1	<0.1	<0.1	15.9	42	28.1	23.2	13.9
Bahamas	<0.1	<0.1	<0.1	<0.1	<0.1	9.5	6	8	7.5	5.6
Barbados	ns	<0.1	<0.1	ns	ns	<5.0	5.2	6.7	<5.0	<5.0
Dominica	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	<5	<5	<5	<5	<5
Grenada	<0.1	<0.1	<0.1	<0.1	<0.1	17.5	31	26.6	23.1	18.7
Haiti	4.4	4.8	5.4	5	5.7	61.1	55.2	57.1	50.6	53.4
Jamaica	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	10.4	7.3	7	8.2	8.1
St. Kitts and Nevis	<0.1	<0.1	<0.1	<0.1	<0.1	14.2	18.3	21.9	17.8	10.2
St. Lucia	<0.1	<0.1	<0.1	<0.1	<0.1	12.8	11.8	11.3	12.8	12.2
St Vincent and the grenadines	<0.1	<0.1	<0.1	<0.1	<0.1	20.7	16.8	9.2	6.8	6.2
Trinidad and Tobago	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.1	0.1	12.6	11.9	11.7	10.2	7.4
Belize	<0.1	<0.1	ns	<0.1	<0.1	9.7	5.8	<5.0	5.7	6.2
Guyana	0.2	<0.1	<0.1	<0.1	<0.1	22.8	9.7	10.4	11.9	10.6
Suriname	<0.1	<0.1	<0.1	<0.1	<0.1	15.5	13.9	11.5	8.7	8

Source: *The State of Food Insecurity (SOFI) in the World, 2015* (FAO, 2015). Data for Antigua and Barbuda, The Bahamas, Grenada, St. Kitts and Nevis, and St. Lucia are from the SOFI 2013.

Notes: 1. Caribbean data includes, in addition to the countries listed in the table: Dominican Republic with 1.3 million of undernourished and Cuba.

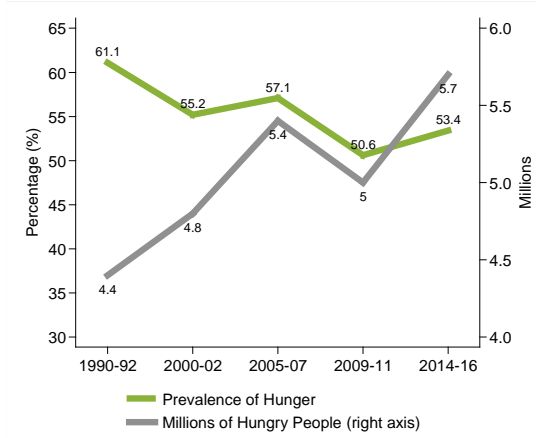
2. Data in the column 2011-16 refer to the most recent available. Data for Antigua and Barbuda, The Bahamas, Grenada, St. Kitts and Nevis, and St. Lucia is for the period 2011-2013 made available in the SOFI 2013. Data for the rest of the countries is for the period 2014-2016 made available in the SOFI 2015 "*nda*" refers to "no data available", "*ns*" to "not statistically significant"

Figure 1. Number (millions) and prevalence (%) of undernourished people in the Caribbean.



Source: The State of Food Insecurity in the World, 2015 (FAO, 2015).

Figure 2. Prevalence of undernourishment (% of population) and Number of undernourished in Haiti, 1990-2016.



Source: The State of Food Insecurity in the World, 2015 (FAO, 2015).



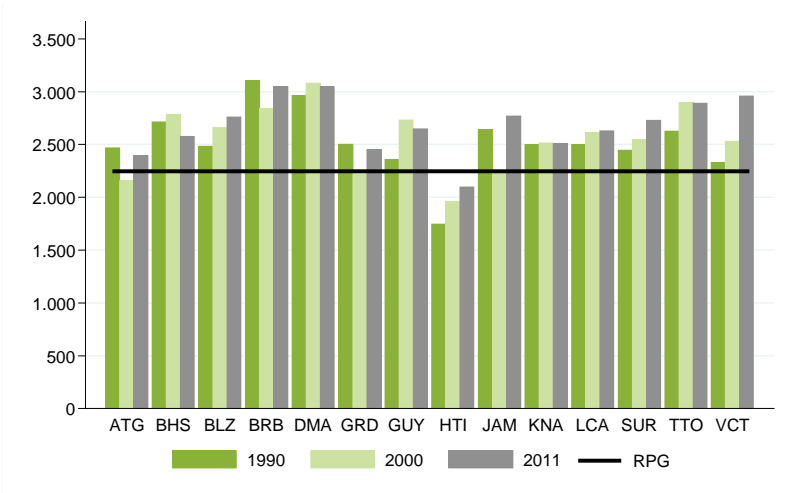
2. The dimensions of Food and Nutrition Security in the CARICOM Caribbean

CARICOM countries effectively embraced the World Food Summit (1996) definition of food and nutrition security in the early 2000s with the launching and implementation of an Italian government supported regional food and nutrition security project. This project facilitated more deliberate and focused attention on all dimensions of food security: food availability, access, consumption/utilization and stability.

2.1 Food Availability

Food energy availability in all CARICOM countries except Haiti exceeds the recommended food energy guidelines or recommended population food goals (RPGs)⁵ (Chart 3). Total CARICOM food energy availability is about 19 percent above RPF, and availability of protein, fats/oils and sugars/sweeteners availability are 35 percent, 29 percent, and 168 percent above RPFs, respectively. In the case of Haiti, total food energy availability is about 20 percent less than RPF.

Figure 3. Food energy availability (kcal/person/day) for CARICOM in 1990, 2000, 2011



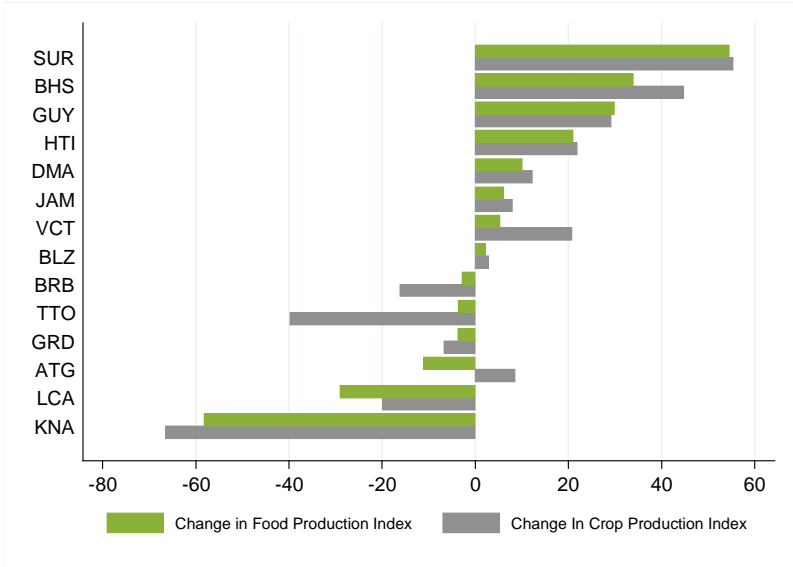
Source: Computed from FAOSTAT (May, 2015). RPF=Recommended Population Food Goal.

5 These Recommended Population Food Goals (RPFs)/Recommended Daily Allowances for Total Energy (Kcal/person/day), and Proteins, Fats/Oils and Sweeteners (gr/person/day) have been estimated by the Caribbean Food and Nutrition Institute (CFNI, 2006).

Most countries in the region are self-sufficient in roots and tubers and in addition, Guyana and Suriname are self-sufficient in rice, and can meet the rice demand of the region. Additionally, most countries have a viable agriculture sector that produces a range of fresh vegetables, legumes and tree crops. Nevertheless, for several essential food groups, national production per capita has declined, most unfortunately including fruits and vegetables. There are three areas that should be of concern to policy makers:

- (i) The regional food production index increased by only 3 percent over the period 2006-13, with eight of the 14 countries having increases (Chart 4), and six countries having decreases in food production, ranging from -2.8 percent (Barbados) to -58 percent (St. Kitts and Nevis).

Figure 4. Changes in food and crop production indices between 2006 and 2013 (%).



Source: Computed with data from World Bank (2015).

- (ii) At the regional level, agriculture’s relative contribution to real GDP averaged 12.9 percent in 1990 but has steadily declined and remained around 7.1 percent over the past decade. Five countries (Guyana, Dominica, Belize, St. Vincent and the Grenadines and Suriname) have an agricultural contribution to GDP above the regional average, while for eight countries’ the contribution is 6 percent or less. In the Organization of

Eastern Caribbean States (OECS), agriculture’s absolute contribution to GDP between 2000 and 2014 has decreased by 9 percent (Chart 5), driven by the cessation of sugar production, the devastation of Grenada’s nutmeg industry after Hurricane Ivan, and negative impacts of the Black Sigatoga and Moko diseases on bananas and plantains, and the loss of preferential overseas markets for the banana industry.

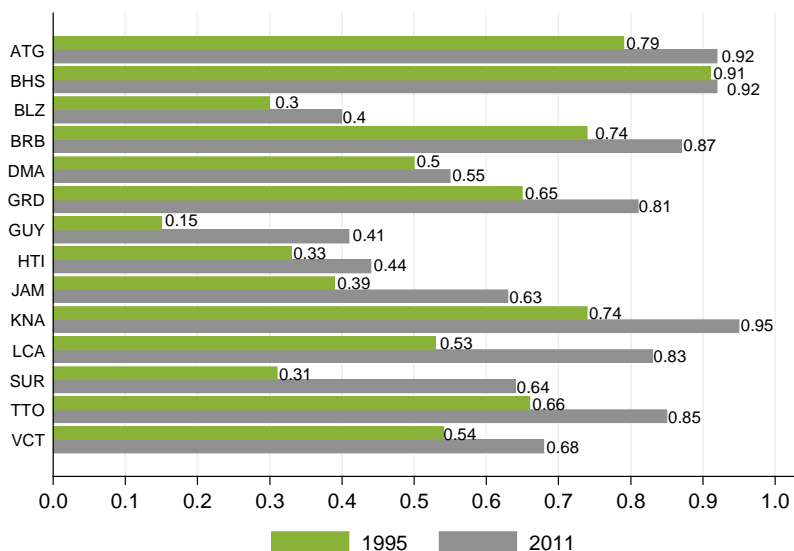
- (iii) CARICOM countries currently import in excess of US\$ 4 billion in food annually, which is an increase of 50 percent since 2000, and food imports are projected to increase to US \$8-10 billion by 2020 if this trend continues. Half of the countries import more than 80 percent of the food they consume (Chart 6). Processed foods, grains (wheat and maize), and meat are among the top five food imports accounting for over US\$ 1 billion or 25 percent of annual food imports regionally.

Figure 5.: Percentage change in absolute contribution of agricultural sector and specific subsectors to real gross domestic product between 2000 and 2014 in the OECS (2006=100)



Source: Computed from data from Eastern Caribbean Central Bank (2015). See [online]: www.eccb-centralbank.org.

Figure 6. CARICOM food import dependence ratio (total food imports/total food consumption)



Source: FAOSTAT, 2015.

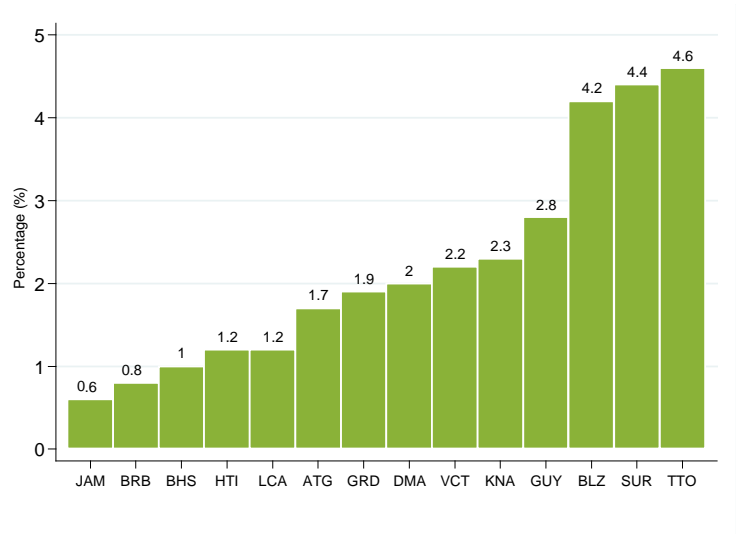
2.2 Food Accessibility

Food access is a key food and nutrition security problem in the Caribbean. It is linked to poverty, which has been increasing in several countries in the region.

Economic Growth

Despite high growth spurts from the 1980s into the mid-1990s, the average rate of real GDP growth in CARICOM countries over the period 2000-2015 has slowed, with only four countries recording between 3-5 percent average growth rates (Chart 7). However, it is not growth per se, but pro-poor growth that has the greatest positive impacts on poverty reduction and increasing food accessibility. Further, there is evidence that faster economic growth is necessary to reduce poverty in countries with high inequality (Lopez, 2004).

Figure 7. Average real GDP growth (2000-2015) in CARICOM countries (2006=100) (Percentage)

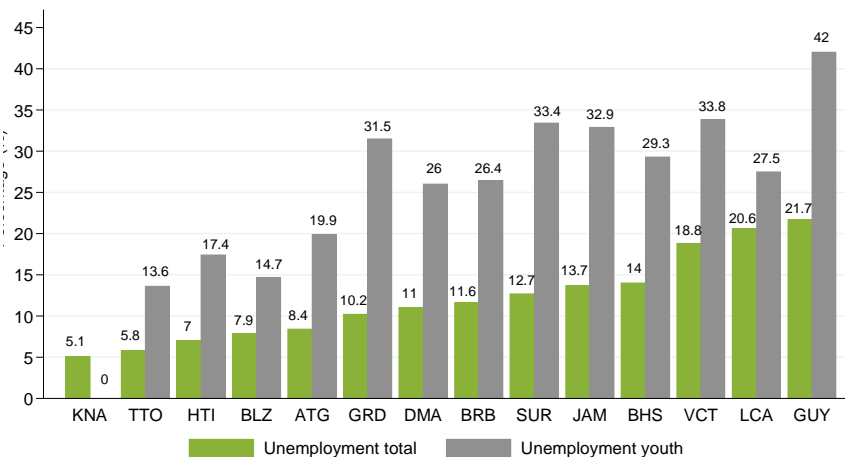


Source: IMF, 2015.

Unemployment

Poverty and unemployment constrain access to food. The average unemployment rate in CARICOM is 12 percent, with higher rates of 18-22 percent observed in Jamaica, the Bahamas, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, St. Lucia and Guyana. Further, the average youth unemployment in the region is 25 percent; with nine countries having a youth unemployment rate higher than the regional average (Chart 8).

Figure 8. Unemployment in CARICOM countries

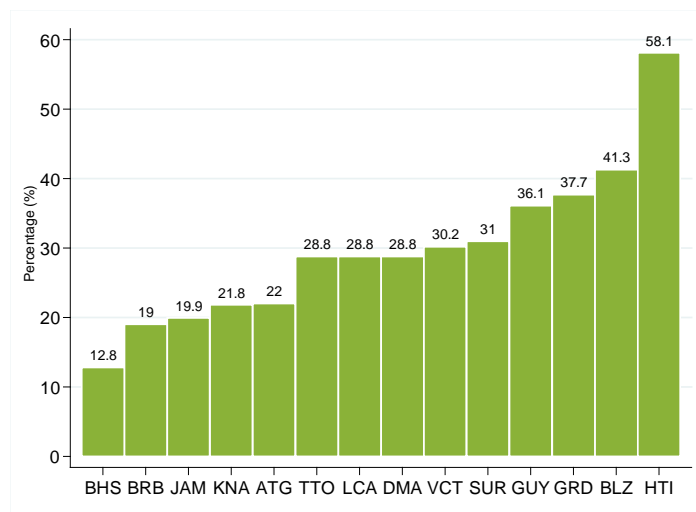


Source: World Bank (last available).

Poverty

About 30 percent of the region's population is absolutely poor. Six countries reported poverty rates between 20-29 percent of the population, and another six reported rates in excess of 30 percent (Chart 9). There is also an additional proportion of the population that is vulnerable to falling into poverty.

Figure 9. Population below the poverty line (%)



Source: Computed by FAO Sub-regional Office, Barbados, using different sources (UNDP, World Bank, CIA).

Findings on poverty are the following:

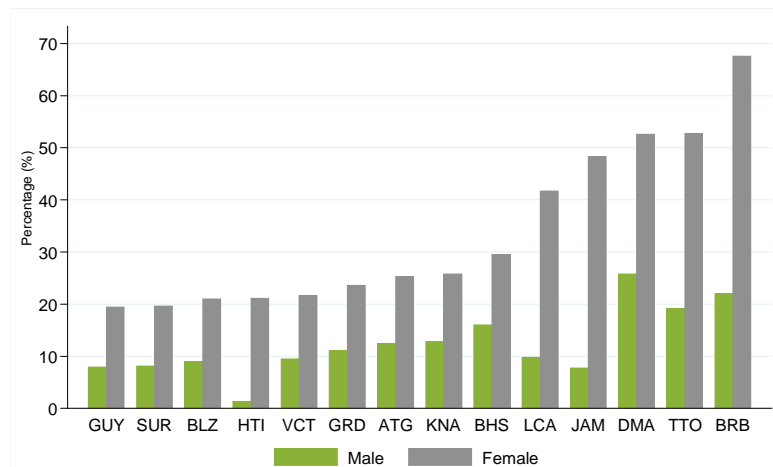
- (i) In all countries, 30-77 percent of the poor were actually employed, a phenomenon that the Country Poverty Assessments (CPAs) referred to as “the working poor”. These are persons whose wages are too low, who work part-time or suffer regular periodic layoffs from work, and whose take-home pay is too low to escape poverty.
- (ii) Young people in 0-14 age group, are disproportionately represented among the poor. They account for 30-40 percent of the poor.
- (iii) In excess of 50 percent of the 15-19 year olds in the labour force are from the two lowest income quintiles. They place a higher premium on work than on education or vocational training.
- (iv) Considering (ii) and (iii) above, there is a high probability that persons from these groups will populate the next wave of the vulnerable population.
- (v) While most of the poor had a primary education, over 45 percent had no educational certification, relegating them to low-paying jobs and underemployment due to seasonality and frequent layoffs.

- (vi) It was observed that there has been an “out-migration” of the poor from the urban and capital city centers to the surrounding parishes in search of better, lower-cost housing.
- (vii) There is also a proportion of the population that is neither food insecure nor below the poverty line but is at risk of falling below the poverty line in the event of an economic shock or natural disaster.

2.3 Food Utilization

Food utilization has been characterized by poor food choices. A nutrition transition has taken place in the CARICOM region which has contributed to an increased prevalence of chronic, non-communicable diseases (NCDs). Many of the food items that are being consumed reflect a shift away from domestic root crops, tubers, fruit and vegetables in favour of food that is low in nutrients, energy-dense and high in fats, oils, sweeteners and sodium. Unhealthy diets lead to overweight and obesity - a major risk factor for chronic non-communicable diseases. Among persons above-15 years of age, female obesity rates in the region are on average about four times higher than that of their male counterparts (Chart 11). In Haiti, obese females outnumber obese males by 16:1, and in Jamaica and St Lucia the ratios are 6:1 and 4:1, respectively. Barbados has the highest rate of female obesity at 67.7 percent. Estimates for children 0-5 years of age in four CARICOM countries indicate that 14.9 percent were overweight and obese.

Figure 10. Obesity prevalence (%) among males and females (above 15 years old), CARICOM (2010)

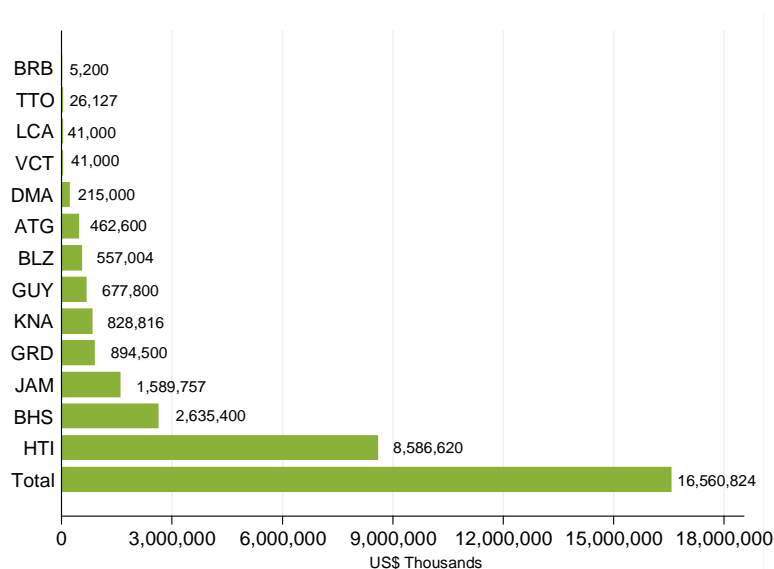


Source: WHO, 2010.

2.4 Stability

Instability and vulnerability constantly undermine efforts to advance food and nutrition security in the region. CARICOM countries generally reflect limited resilience and are vulnerable to natural disasters, which cause extensive damage to property, loss of lives and livelihood systems, thereby, undermining national efforts to enhance food security and reduce poverty. Over the 1990-2014 period, 182 major natural disasters occurred in the region, affecting 11.5 million persons, causing 241,550 deaths (over 200,000 of these deaths occurred in Haiti as a result of the earthquake that damaged the island in 2010), and US\$ 16.6 billion in damage to immovable assets and stock, and losses due to the disruption to the flow of goods and services owing to the disaster (Chart 11). The price increases of 2007-2008 and the recent economic recession have also had negative impacts on food security, reducing incomes and purchasing power.

Figure 11. Damage from natural disasters in CARICOM countries, 1990-2014



Source: EM-DAT Database, 2015.



3. Global, Regional and National Food and Nutrition Security Policies in the Caribbean

CARICOM countries currently have programmes, policies and actions that could enhance food security. Current approaches focus on both supply- and demand-side issues, covering all four components of food security: availability, access, use and stability. The implementation of global and regional mandates and programmes, supported by technical assistance, has combined with national initiatives to contribute to reducing poverty and food insecurity.

3.1 Global Mandates

Several developments at the global and regional levels have combined to influence the conceptualization and approach to food and nutrition security in the region. These include:

- World Food Summit (1996) was instrumental in highlighting food security as encompassing issues of food availability, access, utilization and stability. The MDGs on the other hand, galvanized attention to poverty as a global priority and achieved consensus in the international community on framing the development agendas.
- The United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) 1990 framework on the causes of malnutrition (www.unicef.org/sowc98/fig5.htm).
- Addressing the need to change the focus of economic growth based on unsustainable natural resources extraction, the Brundtland Commission (1987), drew attention to the need for sustainable development, that is, economic growth accompanied by environmental protection, and social well-being of people (equity).
- At the Rio+20 Conference in Brazil in 2012, the UN Secretary General launched the global UN Zero Hunger Challenge Initiative (UNZHCI). The Initiative drew further attention to the estimated 1 billion people still going to bed hungry each day and the significant progress of the Brazilian government in reducing poverty and hunger through its Fome Zero Program that was launched in 2004. The UN ZHCI has five objectives, namely, an end to stunting among children under two because of a lack of nutrients during pregnancy and in the early days of life; 100% access to food for all, all year round; ensuring food systems are sustainable; doubling smallholder productivity and income; and a reduction in food waste.

3.2 Regional Policies and Programmes

- The Regional Food and Nutrition Security Policy (RFNSP) and its Action Plan, is directed at improving standards of living, and providing greater social protection and promoting sustained economic development. The Action Plan covers a number of strategic actions under the four food and nutrition

security components of the Policy. It distinguishes between actions at the regional and country levels, and addresses income and gender inequalities between and within Member States, as well as the relatively higher incidence of poverty among indigenous peoples.

- The Caribbean Community Agricultural Policy: seeks to build on earlier commitments and initiatives, most notably: The revised Treaty of Chaguaramas (2001); The Jagdeo Initiative (2004); The CARICOM Single Market and Economy (CSME) (2009); The Liliendaal Declarations on Agriculture and Food Security; and Climate Change and Development (2009). These initiatives set out policy priorities, areas of policy intervention, and practical action areas. The CAP is a renewed focus on regional agricultural policy in the light of the central importance of agriculture within efforts to promote a Caribbean Single Market and Economy (CSME). The CAP has five pillars for policy intervention:
 - (i) Food and nutrition security.
 - (ii) Production–trade (value) chains.
 - (iii) Sustainable development and natural resources.
 - (iv) Rural modernization and youth programs.
 - (v) A modern knowledge and information system.

The importance of agriculture in CARICOM development strategy was again reinforced at the July 2014 Heads of Government meeting where agriculture was identified in the Caribbean Community Strategic Plan (2015-2019) as one of the drivers of CARICOM economic revitalization.

- CARICOM Agribusiness Development Strategy:

The Caribbean Regional Agribusiness Strategy represents an attempt to capture the political, technical and commercial dimensions needed to advance the process of transformation of the entire agricultural and food sector, thereby ensuring its viability and sustainability. The Strategy recognizes the need for key investments to be made by both public and private sectors in respect of infrastructure, technical knowhow, information management, and marketing systems, in addition to systems for financing both production and trade. The strategy has identified the following priority areas:

- (i) Use of the Value Chain Approach
- (ii) Coordination by use of Commodity Business Models
- (iii) Market Led Approach
- (iv) Critical Constraint – Transportation

- Hunger Eradication initiatives:

The Hunger-Free Latin America and the Caribbean Initiative (HFLACI) was launched in 2005 and supported by the FAO. It embodies the engagement of the countries in the region and organizations to help create the necessary conditions to permanently eradicate hunger by 2025. Since then, there have been several other new high-level initiatives, the latest being the CELAC Plan for Food and Nutrition Security and the Eradication of Hunger (CELAC, 2014; FAO, 2014) adopted in January 2015 by the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC).

3.2 National Policies, Strategies and action plans

Most CARICOM countries have National Food and Nutrition Security Policies and Action Plans (NFNSP/AP). These documents incorporate the essential thematic areas under the four pillars of food and nutrition security: food availability, access, utilization and stability. They build on earlier food and agricultural sector planning and policy documents. They effectively align policies with the Regional Food and Nutrition Food Security Policy/Action Plan, with the aim both of benefiting from its technical and financial resource mobilization, and addressing the problems of food and nutrition challenges in a more focused way. All CARICOM countries have been implementing activities listed in their NFNSP/AP.

CARICOM countries have been addressing the issue of hunger through commitments to meeting the WFS (1996) and MDGs (2000) hunger targets. More recently, in early 2012, With FAO's assistance Antigua and Barbuda launched the Zero Hunger Challenge Initiative Plan of Action 2013-2014, embracing the 5 elements of the UN Zero Hunger Challenge, with the support of FAO and other international agencies. Since then, three other CARICOM countries have embarked on the Initiative: Grenada, St Vincent and the Grenadines (both in implementation stage), and St Lucia.

3.3 Right to Food and Governance for Food and Nutrition Security

- The Right to Food

The conceptual framework for establishing the Right to Food was elaborated in the Voluntary Guidelines for the Right to Food (FAO, 2005). Its origins are in several international instruments, in particular, those instruments in which the progressive realization of the right of everyone to an adequate standard of living, including adequate food, is enshrined. Chief among these instruments are:

- The Charter of the United Nations, Articles 55 and 56 (1945)
- The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 25(1948)

- The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, Article 11 (1966)
- The outcome documents of the World Food Summit (1996)

Food and nutrition security policies are designed to provide a measure of assurance that the policies, once implemented, will be effective in contributing to the realization of the right to adequate food. These include:

(a) A high level of government commitment and accountability with clear responsibilities and time frames.

(b) Effective coordination among government institutions and non-governmental sectors, including civil society and stakeholders.

(b) Effective monitoring to ensure increased inclusiveness and respect for human rights.

The Action Plan of the NFNS policies includes:

- The guiding human rights principles, transparency, accountability and fair treatment for all.
- Promoting the empowerment of rights-holders and duty-bearers as human rights.
- Targeting to promote gender equality.
- A focus on policy actions (i.e. reducing income inequality, increasing employment targeted at the most vulnerable population), that promote institutional development for good governance.
- The application of human rights principles when implementing policy for monitoring food and nutrition security at the regional and national levels.

A review of the National Food and Nutrition Security Policies in selected CARICOM countries indicates that they are designed to be Right to Food-sensitive. All of the policies reflected that they were prepared with inputs from national stakeholders, including policy makers from the various government ministries, private sector and non-governmental organizations. This provided inclusiveness and a sense of national ownership of the policies.

- Governance of Food and Nutrition Security

Governance is more recently being approached as the fifth pillar of food and nutrition security. Good governance is a mechanism that facilitates debate, convergence of views, improves commitment, management, and coordination of action to improve food security (FAO, 2014). It is linked to the right to food and the legislative, institutional and regulatory accountability aspects of governments' responsibility in ensuring the food and nutrition security of the population. It includes concrete public policies and effective participation of private and civil society organizations in the framework of food-system governance.

Work on governance as it relates to food and nutrition security is ongoing, and there is recognition among policymakers that tackling this issue, together with participation of a wide range of stakeholders is essential for success. Countries such as Antigua and Barbuda, and Grenada have initiated multi-stakeholder spaces of coordination that include actors from the various groups, sectors and government agencies related to the implementation of national food and nutrition security policies and action plans, and Zero Hunger Challenge Initiative action plans. Other countries such as St. Lucia have established clusters for specific programmes (as is the case for the school feeding programme).

St. Vincent and the Grenadines has recently launched a Parliamentary Front against Hunger and undernourishment. This is a bi-partisan approach which aims at strengthening political commitment towards inclusive governance for the purpose of developing, drafting, and implementing regulatory frameworks that facilitate the full implementation and sustainability of the National Zero Hunger Challenge Initiative Action Plan.

In most countries, national policies and action plans for Food and Nutrition Security, and Zero Hunger Challenge Initiative action plans have been endorsed at the level of Cabinet. At the same time, specific units (inter-ministerial committees, Food and Nutrition Security Councils, National Authorities and/or National Coordination for Food and Nutrition Security) have been tasked with the coordination of the implementation of these policies and action plans.



Cassava is full of carbohydrates,
vitamins B and potassium.
Oh, and it's delicious.

4. Conclusions

CARICOM countries currently have programmes, policies and action plans in place that could enhance food and nutrition security. Moreover, they have made significant adjustments over the past 15 years in their approaches to food and nutrition security, paying attention to both supply- and demand-side issues. Several programmes appear to focus on finding solutions to the structural factors that lead to hunger and food insecurity. While governments have the ultimate responsibility for advancing their food and nutrition security and poverty alleviation goals, they will need assistance to activate pro-poor economic growth. Furthermore, new sources of growth in the rural sector and resources to facilitate their development and sustainability will need to be mobilized.

2015

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