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Latin America
and the Caribbean
**PANORAMA
OF FOOD AND
NUTRITIONAL
SECURITY**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**HEALTHY FOOD SYSTEMS
TO END HUNGER
AND MALNUTRITION**

2016
LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN
PANORAMA OF
FOOD AND
NUTRITIONAL
SECURITY

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This text is the executive summary of the 2016 edition of the *Panorama of Food and Nutritional Security in Latin America and the Caribbean*, an annual publication produced by the Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), and the Pan-American Health Organization (PAHO)/ the Regional Office for the Americas of the World Health Organization (WHO).

For communication and dissemination purposes, all quotes and bibliographical references have been removed from the text, but can be found in the full document of the *Panorama*, available at <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i6747s.pdf>.

A special acknowledgment to Sally Hinds, who delivered the translation for this executive summary.





PROLOGUE

Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) is in transition between two key moments of its development. While in the past 20 years LAC countries have made progress in the prevention and control of nutritional deficiencies, there has also been a rapid rise in the prevalence of overweight and obesity, affecting the entire population regardless of their economic status, place of residence or ethnic origin.

The coexistence of hunger, undernutrition, micronutrient deficiencies, overweight and obesity is caused, among other factors, by poor access to a healthy diet that provides the amount of nutrients needed to lead a healthy and active life. Economic growth and the greater integration of Latin America and the Caribbean in international markets has produced changes in eating patterns: a marked reduction in the home cooking of traditional dishes based on fresh foods and an increasing presence and consumption of ultra-processed foods with low nutrient density but a high content of sugar, sodium and fat. This change in eating habits has contributed to the persistence of malnutrition in all its forms, and a decrease in quality of life.

This scenario requires an in-depth analysis of the sustainability and nutritional relevance of the current food system, taking into account population growth, the demands imposed by urban life, the purchasing power of households, convenience and the cultural

preferences of the population. This analysis should propose innovative strategies that ensure that all people, in particular the poor and those living in situations of vulnerability, have access to sufficient healthy and nutritious food all year round.

In 2015, LAC culminated a successful period of reducing hunger and malnutrition, by achieving target 1C of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), and halving the prevalence of undernourishment. In the same year, the international community endorsed the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), one of which is the definitive eradication of hunger and malnutrition in all its forms by the year 2030. In addition, in 2016 the United Nations General Assembly proclaimed 2016-2025 the Decade of Action on Nutrition, in order to put nutrition at the centre of the 2030 Agenda, and promote cooperation on food and nutritional security across the world.

Latin America and the Caribbean went even further than the rest of the world by establishing its own, even more demanding target, through the Hunger Free Latin America and the Caribbean Initiative and the Plan for Food Security, Nutrition and the Eradication of Hunger of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC). Through these initiatives, the countries pledged to eradicate hunger by 2025, five years before the goal agreed in the SDGs.

Similarly, by approving the Comprehensive Application Plan on Maternal, Infant and Young Child Nutrition, the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean pledged to significantly reduce undernutrition, overweight and anaemia, and increase the prevalence of breastfeeding before the year 2025.

Both the world and the regional development agendas highlight the importance of putting in practice intersectoral approaches and establishing effective coordination between actors in order to meet the development targets. In this framework, two key international agencies engaged in agriculture, food, nutrition and health have joined forces to broadly and comprehensively characterize food and nutritional security and propose integrated solutions.

Thus, for the first time the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the Pan American Health Organization/ World Health Organization (PAHO/WHO) have come together to edit the most important report on the state of the fight against hunger and malnutrition in the region: the *Panorama of Food and Nutritional Security in Latin America and the Caribbean*.

This edition of the Panorama describes the food and nutritional security situation in Latin America and the Caribbean, putting special emphasis on the nutritional state, and its importance for achieving economic and social development in the region.

This publication is the first step in a series of coordinated efforts between FAO and PAHO to put an end to hunger, achieve food security, improve nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture, so that our Member States can achieve Goal 2 of the SDG. We hope that this effort will also help to motivate governments, international development agencies, donors, the private sector and civil society to coordinate actions to put an end to hunger and malnutrition.

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CHAPTER 1

NEW FOOD CHALLENGES IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

NEW FOOD CHALLENGES IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS: AN OPPORTUNITY TO ELIMINATE HUNGER AND MALNUTRITION

The new Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) are, in large part, a reflection of the social and economic changes experienced in the world in recent years: an environment with ongoing and emerging challenges¹ but, unlike the agenda promoted by the Millennium Development Goals (MDG), they acknowledge that these problems affect all countries, are closely interrelated and that their solution requires the agreement and work of all.

¹ It is important to remember that many of the current development problems addressed by the SDGs were not sufficiently present in the MDGs, such as for example climate change, inequality, inefficient food consumption patterns, or difficulties in the generation of and access to energy.

The SDGs, in addition to continuing the work begun by the MDGs, have two features that differentiate them from their predecessors, and that involve significant changes in the way in which countries will tackle them:

- 1) Goals include not just the reduction but the **complete elimination of many social problems**. Among them, Goal 2 proposes the absolute eradication of hunger and malnutrition;
- 2) Countries should make progress in improving mechanisms for the fulfilment of the SDGs, which implies the adoption of **an integrated and multisectoral approach** in order to adequately respond to the commitments made by the different nations.

These two features create a scenario in which the achievement of these goals requires the strengthening of the inclusive governance proposed by Agenda 2030: the inclusion of new stakeholders, both from the point of view of their nature -public and private stakeholders, academia and civil society- and their sectoral relevance -agriculture, food, health, nutrition, education, social development,

economics, etc.-; as well as their effective integration and appropriate platforms for this interaction to be consolidated.

In particular, the Agenda 2030 goal related to the achievement of food and nutritional security is SDG 2: End hunger, achieve food security, improve nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture. Among its 8 targets and 15 indicators, 2 targets make direct reference to the eradication of hunger and malnutrition:

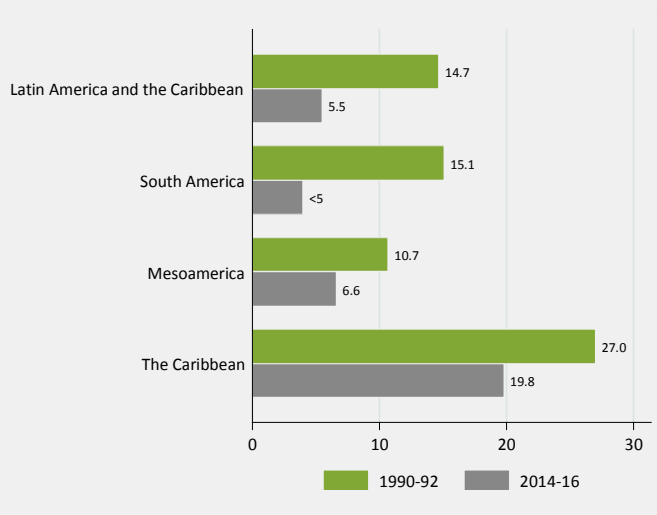
a) Target 2.1: By 2030, put an end to hunger and ensure that all people, particularly the poor and people in situations of vulnerability, including infants, have access to sufficient healthy, nutritious food all year round;

b) Target 2.2: By 2030, put an end to all forms of malnutrition, even achieving, at the latest by 2025, the internationally agreed targets on stunting and wasting among children under 5 years old, and address the nutritional needs of adolescent girls, pregnant and nursing women and elderly people.

One of the main indicators regarding hunger that arises from the monitoring of the MDGs, is the prevalence of undernourishment, which is now one of the indicators of Target 2.1. Figure 1 shows the evolution of this indicator in Latin America and the Caribbean over the past 25 years. It shows a continuous trend towards reduction that has allowed the prevalence of undernourishment to be more than halved during this period. Even so, the daily energy requirements of 5.5% of the population, about 34.3 million people, are still not being met.

FIGURE 1

EVOLUTION OF THE PREVALENCE OF UNDERNOURISHMENT IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN (1990-92 AND 2014-16), IN PERCENTAGE



Source: FAO (online). Global Food Security Indicators.

On the other hand, two of the main indicators of Target 2.2 are the prevalence of stunting in children under 5 years old; and the prevalence of children under 5 affected by overweight².

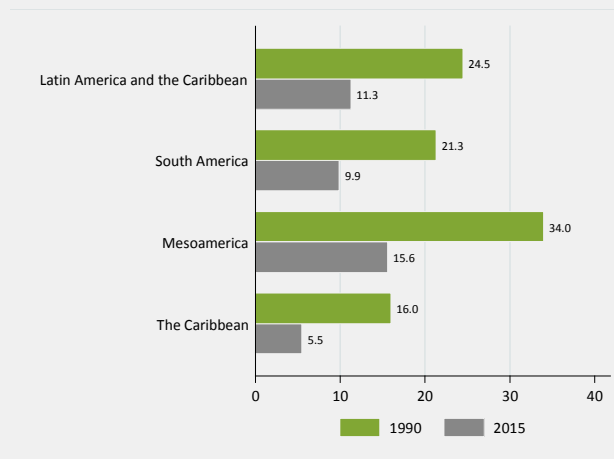
In the case of the first indicator, estimations of stunting in Latin America and the Caribbean have been reduced since 1990, when it was estimated to affect 24.5% of the child population. In 2015, this figure stood at 11.3%, which means that 6.1 million children suffered from stunting (Figure 2).

On the other hand, Target 2.2 also addresses the other face of malnutrition, by tracking the evolution of the prevalence of overweight in children under 5 years old. According to the latest estimates, 7.2% of children under 5 years old in Latin America and the Caribbean, i.e. 3.9 million children, were affected by this condition in 2015 (Figure 3).

² It should be noted that this indicator (numbered as 2.2.2) makes textual reference to "the prevalence of malnutrition among children under 5 years old, disaggregated by type". The summary version of the Panorama only includes overweight in children under 5 years, but the complete version also includes the prevalence of wasting, which is another official indicator of Target 2.2.

FIGURE 2

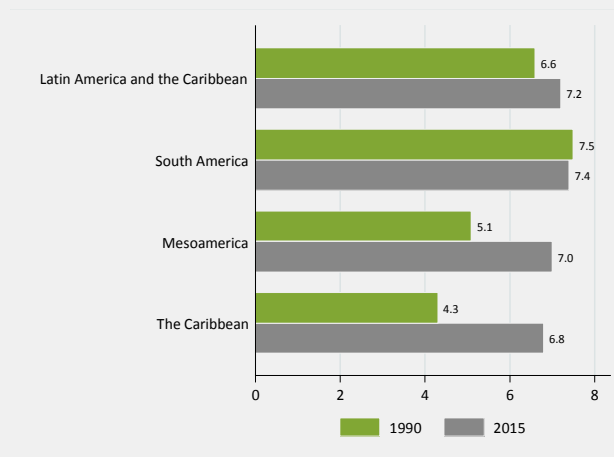
EVOLUTION OF THE PREVALENCE OF STUNTING IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN (1990 AND 2015), IN PERCENTAGE



Source: WHO (online). Global Health Observatory (GHO) data.

FIGURE 3

PREVALENCE OF OVERWEIGHT IN CHILDREN UNDER 5 YEARS OLD IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN (1990 AND 2015), IN PERCENTAGE



Source: WHO (online). Global Health Observatory (GHO) data.

LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN HAS GLOBAL AND REGIONAL INSTRUMENTS IN PLACE FOR THE ACHIEVEMENT OF SDG 2

Although the period of work for the SDGs is just beginning, the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean already have tools that can guide the development of policies, legislation, programmes and interventions that enable the achievement of SDG 2, and in particular the newly designated targets 2.1 and 2.2. These policy instruments include the following:

a) **Framework for Action of the Second International Conference on Nutrition (ICN2) 2025.** This Framework was approved in 2014 in the context of the Second International Conference on Nutrition led by FAO and the World Health Organization (WHO). In it the countries of the world pledged, inter alia, to eradicate hunger and put an end to all forms of malnutrition, as well as to reverse the upward trend of overweight and obesity and reduce the burden of diet related Non-Communicable Diseases (NCD); promote sustainable food systems; increase the importance of nutrition in public policies; develop policies for the promotion of healthy diets; and improve the information available to consumers regarding food products. For this purpose the countries adopted a Framework for Action with 60 policy recommendations for achieving the goals of the ICN2. It should be noted that, in the context of the implementation of the Framework for Action, the United Nations General

Assembly adopted a resolution to declare 2016-2025 the Decade of Action on Nutrition, with the aim of mobilizing resources for the fight against hunger and malnutrition in the world.

b) **Comprehensive Implementation Plan on Maternal, Infant and Young Child Nutrition.** Approved by the World Health Assembly in 2012, the Plan has six global nutrition targets, to be met by the year 2025: 1) Reduce stunting in children under 5 years old by 40%; (2) Reduce anaemia in women of reproductive age by 50%; (3) Reduce the prevalence of low birth weight by 30%; (4) Ensure that rates of overweight in children do not increase; (5) Increase the rate of exclusive breastfeeding in the first 6 months by at least 50%; (6) Reduce wasting in children and maintain at under 5%.

c) **Global Action Plan for the Prevention and Control of Non-Communicable Diseases (NCD).** In 2013 the countries of the world pledged, by means of this Plan, to meet 9 voluntary targets: 1) Reduce by 25% in relative terms the total mortality from cardiovascular diseases, cancer, diabetes, or chronic respiratory diseases; 2) Reduce by at least 10% the harmful use of alcohol; 3) Reduce by 10% the prevalence of physical inactivity; 4) Reduce the population's average daily intake of salt/sodium by 30%; 5) Reduce by 30% the prevalence of tobacco use in persons of 15 years or over; 6) Reduce by 25% the prevalence of hypertension, or reduce the prevalence of hypertension depending on the circumstances of the country; 7) Halt the rise in diabetes and obesity; 8) Ensure that at least 50% of the people who need it receive pharmacotherapy and counselling to prevent heart attacks and strokes; and 9) make accessible to 80% of those who need it basic technologies and essential medicines necessary to treat the main non-communicable diseases.

d) **The CELAC Plan for Food Security, Nutrition and the Eradication of Hunger 2025.** Taking as a precedent the Hunger Free Latin America and the Caribbean Initiative, in 2015 the 33 member countries of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC), approved this Plan, which represents a strategic policy framework for ending hunger and malnutrition in Latin America and the Caribbean by 2025. To achieve this goal, the Plan is structured on 4 pillars with both national and regional public policy recommendations: (1) Coordinated food security strategies through national and regional public policies with a gender perspective and rights based approach; (2) Timely and sustainable access to sufficient, safe, adequate, and nutritious food for all people; (3) Nutritional wellbeing and guarantee of nutrient availability, respecting the diversity of eating-habits, and; (4) Stable production and timely attention to socio-natural disasters that may affect food availability.

e) **Plan of Action for the Prevention of Obesity in Children and Adolescents.** The Plan proposes 5 lines of strategic action to address the phenomenon: (1) Primary health care and promotion of breastfeeding and healthy eating; (2) Improvement of the school environment with regard to nutrition and physical activity; (3) Fiscal policies and regulation of the advertising and labelling of food; (4) Other cross-sectoral measures, and; (5) Monitoring, research and evaluation.

A common feature of these specialized frameworks for food and nutritional security and health, is that

they transcend the traditional sectoral level in which they operate; i.e. they are policy instruments that involve various actors and sectors engaged in the eradication of hunger and malnutrition. Thus, as mentioned above, they address the broad nature of the SDGs and the need to tackle them in a coordinated manner.

The intersectoral character of SDG 2, and the plans and action frameworks mentioned above, is notable, among other elements, by the fact that its achievement requires the joint work of sectors related to nutrition and agriculture, two key areas for food and nutritional security.

THE ACHIEVEMENT OF GOAL 2 OF THE SDGS DEPENDS ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF SUSTAINABLE AND NUTRITION-SENSITIVE FOOD SYSTEMS.

The transformation of our food systems to integrate agriculture with nutrition is one of the necessary steps within the challenge of eradicating hunger and malnutrition in Latin America and the Caribbean over the next 15 years. For this reason it is essential that countries in the region focus their efforts over the coming years on the development of sustainable and nutrition-sensitive food systems.

A sustainable food system is one that provides nutritious food that is accessible to all and in which natural resources are managed so as to preserve ecosystems for satisfying current and future human needs as well as providing dietary, economic, environmental and nutritional products and services.

On the other hand, a nutrition-sensitive food system is defined as that which, recognizing the role of food and agriculture for nutrition, places the reduction of malnutrition among its goals by seeking to increase food availability, not only in terms of volume, but also in terms of accessibility, diversity, sustainability and nutritional characteristics. This implies that increased productivity in different agricultural areas should take into account the nutritional, social, and environmental effects of food.

Improving the characteristics and operation of food systems is key to ensuring good nutrition, which is in turn the basis for physical and cognitive development, wellbeing, good health and economic productivity. What's more: good nutrition is the key to breaking the inter-generational poverty cycle. Good maternal nutrition allows the birth of healthy children, which grow up to become healthier adults who are less prone to diseases that may affect their productive and social inclusion. In fact, the World Bank estimates that economic losses due to undernutrition or micronutrient deficiencies are, globally, between 2 and 3 percentage points of GDP. Similarly, the WHO has warned that overweight and obesity are linked to lower rates of productivity and rising medical costs because of the treatment of NCD.

Among the determinants of good or bad nutrition - the latter understood as undernutrition, overweight, obesity and the lack of micronutrients -, eating patterns is certainly one of the most important. The quantity and quality of food consumed is the key to jointly reducing hunger and malnutrition in all its forms, and also the area in which the transformation of food systems can have most effect on nutrition. Indeed, demographic and economic changes during recent decades have led to changes in food consumption patterns and thus in food systems: this can be seen in the shift from a diet based on foods and meals prepared from unprocessed or minimally processed foods, to one based increasingly on ultra-processed products high in free sugars, unhealthy fats and salt.

A diet based on calorie dense products, i.e. high in sugar, salt and fat, is a risk factor for the development of obesity and other NCD. Similarly an insufficient diet lacking in variety increases the risk of undernutrition and micronutrient deficiencies. In this sense, and considering that malnutrition is a transversal issue that is present in all segments of the population, the establishment of healthier food

consumption patterns is one of the most effective and sustainable ways to improve the region's nutritional situation.

Even though the composition of a healthy diet depends on the cultural particularities of each country or region, there is a consensus that it must contain a balanced combination of macronutrients like carbohydrates, proteins and fats; as well as essential micro-nutrients, such as vitamins and minerals. This has been reflected in the establishment of food-based dietary guidelines (FBDGs) in the vast majority of the world's countries, which recommend as the basis of an adequate diet the consumption of fresh foods, including a variety of cereals, especially whole grains; pulses; fruits and vegetables; as well as animal source foods.

Food systems can make a key contribution to nutrition and in particular the establishment of healthy eating patterns. Without the existence of a varied and accessible supply of food from different species, it is impossible for countries to promote changes in food consumption patterns that allow the establishment of a healthy diet. The reality of the region in particular shows that, despite improvements in the quality and diversity of agricultural exports, the diversity and quality of domestic supply is still limited, especially with respect to the diet of the most vulnerable sectors, which has had negative effects on the food consumption patterns of the population.



CHAPTER 2

ANALYSIS OF THE DIMENSIONS OF FOOD AND NUTRITIONAL SECURITY

ANALYSIS OF THE DIMENSIONS OF FOOD AND NUTRITIONAL SECURITY

LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN HAS SUFFICIENT FOOD TO FEED ITS POPULATION: THE CHALLENGE IS TO ENSURE A HEALTHY AND VARIED FOOD SUPPLY

The production of food and agricultural products in Latin America and the Caribbean has increased hand in hand with demand, providing sufficient food for the population, and at the same time allowing it to be a major player in the world agri-food trade. This good performance has resulted in an increase in food availability in terms of calories, reaching 3 069 calories per day per person, which means an increase of 15% with regard to the availability recorded at the beginning of the 1990s.

Over the past 25 years, food availability in South America has increased by 19%, reaching an average of 3 141 calories per day per person. In Mesoamerica, meanwhile food availability is 2 964 calories per capita, which represents an increase of 5% in the same time period; while in the Caribbean there has been a 19% increase in caloric availability over the period, reaching 2 758 calories per day per person in the last three years.

However, this situation does not guarantee that all people consume food of adequate quality, quantity and variety to maintain a healthy and nutritious diet. Indeed, although caloric availability is important, the source of these calories is also important in terms of macronutrients. As shown in Table 1, total fat intake should not exceed 30% of the total amount of calories consumed, and it is recommended that less than 10% of calories come from free sugars.

An analysis of the availability of different food groups in grams per person, both globally and regionally (Table 2), shows that fruits and vegetables are the food group with greater availability per capita, followed by grains and meats.

TABLE 1**MACRONUTRIENT INTAKE TARGETS FOR THE POPULATION**

Dietary component	Target (% of total energy if not otherwise indicated)
Total fats	15% - 30%
Saturated fatty acids	<10%
Polyunsaturated fatty acids (PUFA)	6% - 10%
Omega-6 Polyunsaturated fatty acids	5% - 8%
Omega-3 Polyunsaturated fatty acids	1% - 2%
Trans fatty acids	< 1%
Monounsaturated fatty acids	difference
Total carbohydrates	55%-75%
Free sugars	< 10%
Proteins	10% - 15%
Cholesterol	< 300mg/day
Sodium chloride (sodium)	< 5g/day (<2g/day)
Fruits and vegetables	= 400g/day
Total dietary Fibre	in food
Non-starch polysaccharides	in food

Source: WHO (2003).

TABLE 2

AVAILABILITY OF DIFFERENT FOOD GROUPS IN WORLD REGIONS. DAILY GRAMS PER PERSON, AVERAGES FOR 2009-11

	Cereals	Meats	Fruits and vegetables	Fish	Dairy	Pulses	Roots and tubers	Sugars	Vegetable oils
Latin America and the Caribbean	341	187	446	27	335	31	143	119	37
The Caribbean	283	125	568	27	179	40	201	109	30
Mesoamerica	413	148	404	27	283	32	43	133	28
South America	318	208	452	26	371	29	178	114	41
World	402	115	568	51	244	18	170	66	31
Africa	416	50	359	28	125	30	354	44	23
Asia	426	85	628	58	156	17	122	46	25
Europe	360	209	570	60	601	8	228	113	49
Oceania	254	297	526	72	522	9	174	127	54
North America	291	319	612	60	685	12	165	161	81

Source: FAO (online). FAOSTAT

A specific look at Latin America and the Caribbean shows that the region, both as a whole and at the subregional level, surpasses 400 grams of fruits and vegetables available daily per capita, which would comply with the food intake recommendations set by the WHO. On the other hand, the regional average availability of sugar, meat and fish stand out: while

the first two are much higher than the global average, and in the case of sugar higher than the European average, the availability of fish is well below the world average. In fact, Latin America and the Caribbean is the region that has the least grams of fish available per capita in the world.

Meanwhile, with regards to macronutrients, Table 3 shows that in terms of quantity the region's protein availability is within the recommended range. The availability of fats, however, is above the recommended range. On the other hand, a subregional analysis shows that protein availability

is within the recommended intake margins, while in both Mesoamerica and South America fat availability exceeds the recommended maximum intake. It should be noted that while the availability of certain food groups or macronutrients is not synonymous of their consumption, it is an important factor for characterizing the structure of the regional food pattern.

TABLE 3

AVERAGE DIETARY ENERGY REQUIREMENTS (ADER)*, DAILY INTAKE RANGE AND AVAILABILITY OF PROTEINS AND FATS PER PERSON. AVERAGES FOR 2009-11

	ADER	Calorie range		Range in grams		Availability in grams	
	Calories	Proteins	Fats	Proteins	Fats	Proteins	Fats
Latin America and the Caribbean	2.375	236-354	354-708	59-88	39-79	82	92
The Caribbean	2.372	237-356	356-712	59-89	40-79	66	68
Mesoamerica	2.310	231-347	347-693	58-87	39-77	81	84
South America	2.378	238-357	357-713	59-89	40-79	84	98

Source: Prepared by the authors with FAO data (online). FAOSTAT

*Uses average dietary energy requirements (ADER), which are a normative reference for adequate nutrition in a population. For each gram of carbohydrate and protein 4 calories are obtained; each gram of fat gives 9 calories.

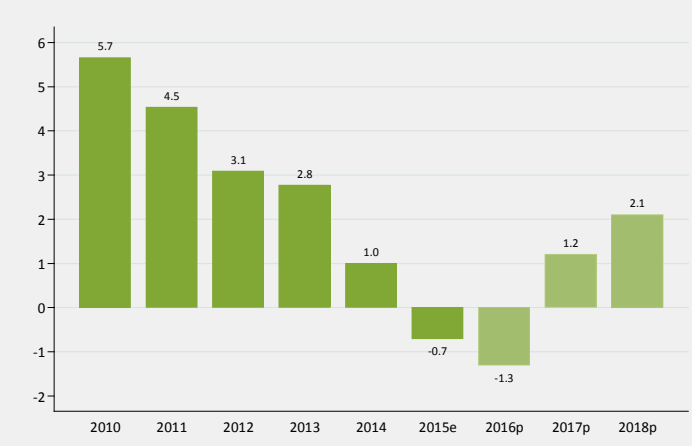
THE CURRENT ECONOMIC CONTEXT PUTS PROGRESS IN FOOD AND NUTRITIONAL SECURITY AT RISK

The transformation of food consumption patterns depends not only on food availability, but also on the population having access to the food supply.

Among the various determinants of access to food, economic growth is one of the foundations for improving living conditions, increasing household incomes and thereby ensuring food and nutritional security. In 2014, the growth of GDP in the region was only 1%, and in the year 2015 the region presented a decrease in growth of 0.7%; regional growth recovery is only projected from 2017 (Figure 4). This economic downturn has had repercussions in the countries: unemployment has increased across the region, and trends in the reduction of poverty and inequality have stagnated and in some countries levels have even increased, which could put the food and nutritional security of the most vulnerable households at risk.

FIGURE 4

GROWTH AND PROJECTION OF GDP IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN BETWEEN 2010 AND 2018, IN PERCENTAGE



Source: World Bank (Online) World development indicators. World Bank (2016).
e/ corresponds to estimates; p/ corresponds to projections.

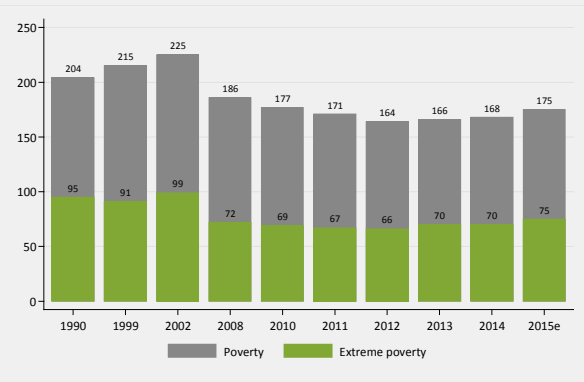
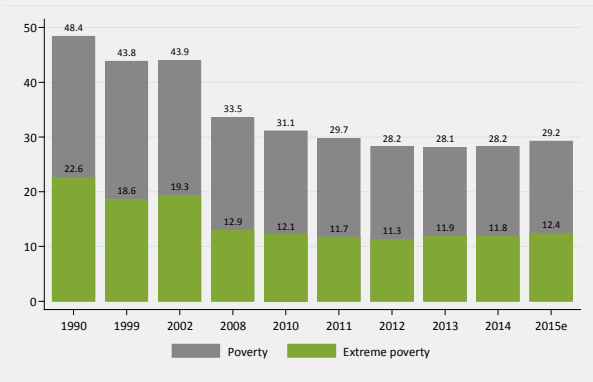
Within the region, the South American countries, as commodity exporters, are the most affected by the current economic situation, as they are faced with lower demand for their main exports and a decline in international prices for these products. Mesoamerica and the Caribbean countries have been less affected by the economic downturn, and a quick recovery is expected in the next few years. However, it should be noted that many countries in both subregions still face important challenges regarding the eradication of poverty, hunger and malnutrition.

Overcoming poverty is a fundamental condition for ensuring access to food and the eradication of hunger. In this regard, the region has already made substantial progress in the reduction of poverty, in a

context of macroeconomic stability. Since 1990, rates of poverty and extreme poverty have been reduced, and in absolute terms there has been a substantial reduction in the number of people living in poverty and extreme poverty. However, it is important to note that since 2012 this situation has changed: while rates of prevalence of poverty and extreme poverty have come to a standstill, and even increased for extreme poverty, in absolute terms the number of people affected by poverty and extreme poverty has mildly but constantly increased (Figure 5).

FIGURE 5

EVOLUTION OF POVERTY AND EXTREME POVERTY IN LATIN AMERICA, 1990-2015



Source: ECLAC (2015a).
e/ corresponds to estimates.

FOOD PRICES DETERMINE ACCESS TO A HEALTHY DIET, ESPECIALLY FOR THE VULNERABLE POPULATION

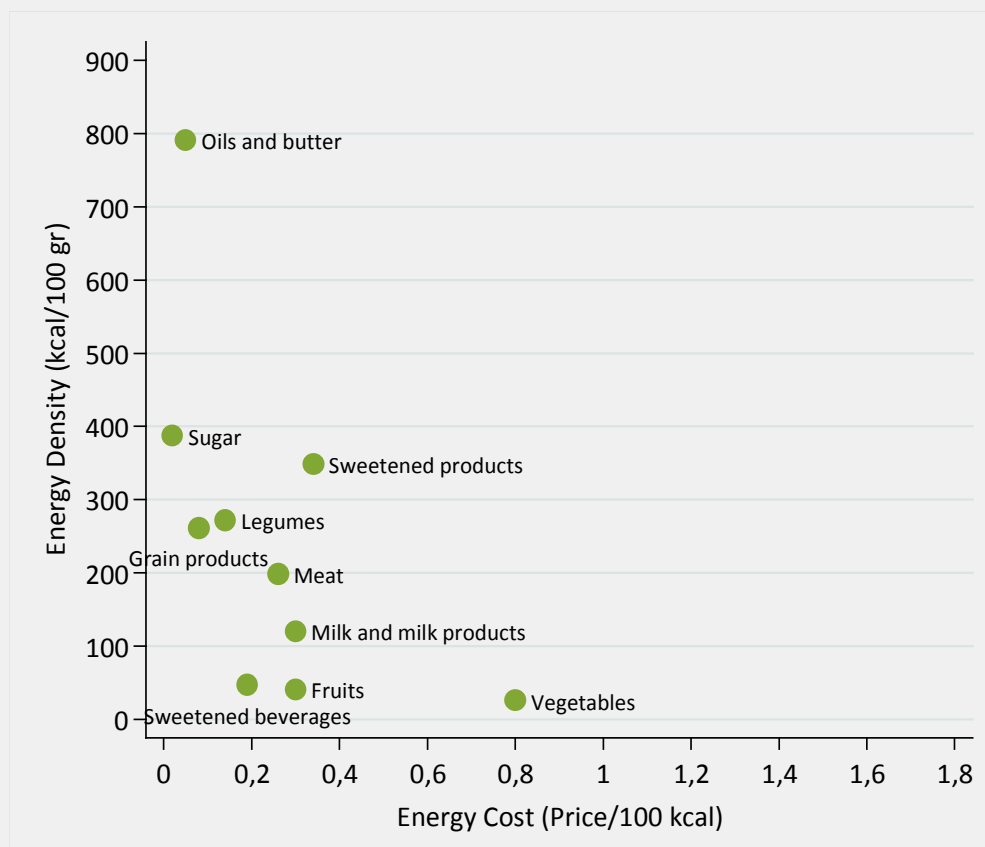
Among the variables that determine access to food, are food prices, since they determine the quantity and quality of food that can be purchased with a certain household income. In a scenario in which the reduction of poverty and inequality has come to a standstill in the region, it is important to analyse the cost of a healthy diet compared to the calorically dense products on offer, which are often cheaper than traditional foods, and usually replace healthier diets in the context of lower available income.

Based on data from 8 of the region's countries³, according to their nutritional characteristics the cost per 100 calories was analysed for 10 types of products: sugar (free sugar, refined sugar, brown sugar); sweets (processed products containing free sugars, jams and

chocolates); sugar-sweetened beverages (soft drinks, packaged juices and powdered juices containing sugar); pulses (beans, lentils, peas); butters and oils (butter, margarine, oils); meats (all types of meat, fish and eggs); dairy (milk, yogurt, cream, cheese); fruits; vegetables; and cereals (cereals, roots, tubers and starches). The results, which are displayed in Figure 6, show that the cost per calorie in fruits and vegetables is greater than the cost per calorie of sugar, which may limit access to the food needed for a healthy diet, especially for families with low purchasing power.

It should be taken into account that a diet rich in fruits and vegetables means, on the one hand, a low total energy intake, and on the other hand implies a higher intake of micronutrients. Thus, while vegetables have a high caloric cost, this is because a larger quantity is needed in order to obtain a certain number of calories compared to other foods; however, large amounts are not needed to obtain significant amounts of micronutrients. In this way, by comparing the average caloric cost (price per 100 calories) of each food group with its caloric concentration (number of calories per 100 grams), an inverse relationship is observed between the two, where the greater the concentration of calories, the lower the caloric cost of the food group. This sets up a scenario in which foods that are poorer from a nutritional point of view are more economically accessible than those rich in macro and micronutrients. This is ultimately a limiting factor for the establishment of healthy eating patterns, especially in the most vulnerable households.

³ A small scale analysis has been carried out according to the data available for the food baskets in the consumer price indices, or prices and composition of food baskets according to official sources for the Plurinational State of Bolivia, Chile, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua and Uruguay.

FIGURE 6**CALORIC CONCENTRATION (PER 100 GRAMS) VERSUS CALORIC COST (IN DOLLARS)
BY FOOD GROUP. AVERAGE OF 8 COUNTRIES**

Source: Prepared by the authors with official information from the countries.

OBESITY AND OVERWEIGHT INCREASE IN THE REGION AND COEXIST WITH IMPORTANT RATES OF UNDERNUTRITION

Malnutrition is manifested in different forms and is present in a significant proportion of the regional population. Its direct causes include inadequate consumption of food in the quantity and quality

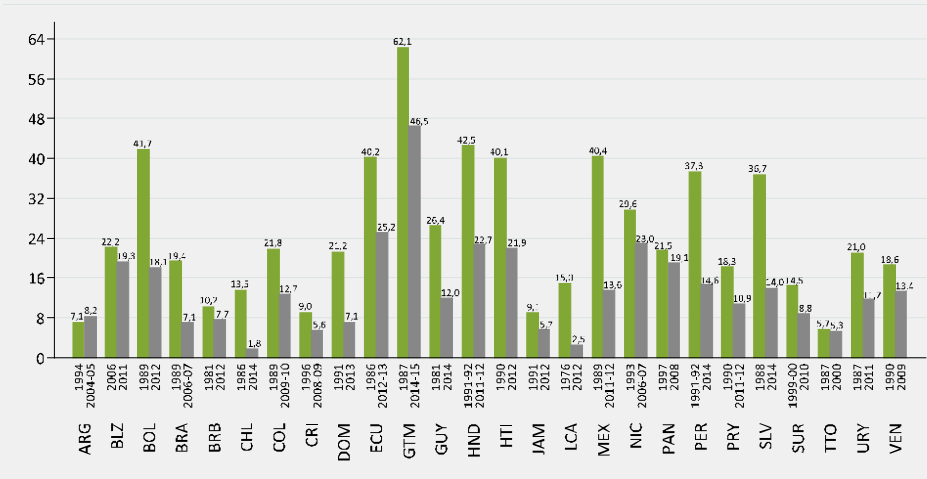
needed to meet the organism's basic needs. The different forms of malnutrition imply deterioration in individual development, diminishing chances for development and becoming a heavy burden on health systems, which brings with it a series of economic and social consequences.

The analysis of some indicators supports the claim that, despite progress in this area, stunting, micronutrient deficiencies, and overweight and obesity coexist within the region; often within the same socioeconomic level and even within the same household.

On one hand, child undernutrition has decreased over the last decades in Latin America and the Caribbean, from 18% in 2000 to 11.3% in 2015. Even so, Figure 7 shows that there are still countries where

FIGURE 7

EVOLUTION OF STUNTING IN COUNTRIES OF LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN, IN PERCENTAGE



Source: OMS (online). Global Health Observatory (GHO) data and official information from the countries.

the prevalence of stunting is considerably high, mainly affecting the poorest sectors, and mostly in rural areas. Currently, 6.1 million children under five years old are in this state, which disaggregates into 3.3 million in South America; 2.6 million in Mesoamerica; and 200 thousand in the Caribbean.

On the other hand, as shown in Figure 8, the prevalence of overweight in children under 5 years old varies between countries, and is distributed between 3.6% in Haiti (2012) and 12.2% in Barbados (2012). It should be noted that Argentina, Barbados, the Plurinational State of Bolivia, Brazil, Belize, Chile, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Jamaica, Mexico, Paraguay and Uruguay reported prevalence rates above the LAC average of 7.2%.

FIGURE 8

PREVALENCE OF OVERWEIGHT IN CHILDREN UNDER 5 YEARS OLD IN SOME COUNTRIES OF LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN, VARIOUS YEARS, IN PERCENTAGE

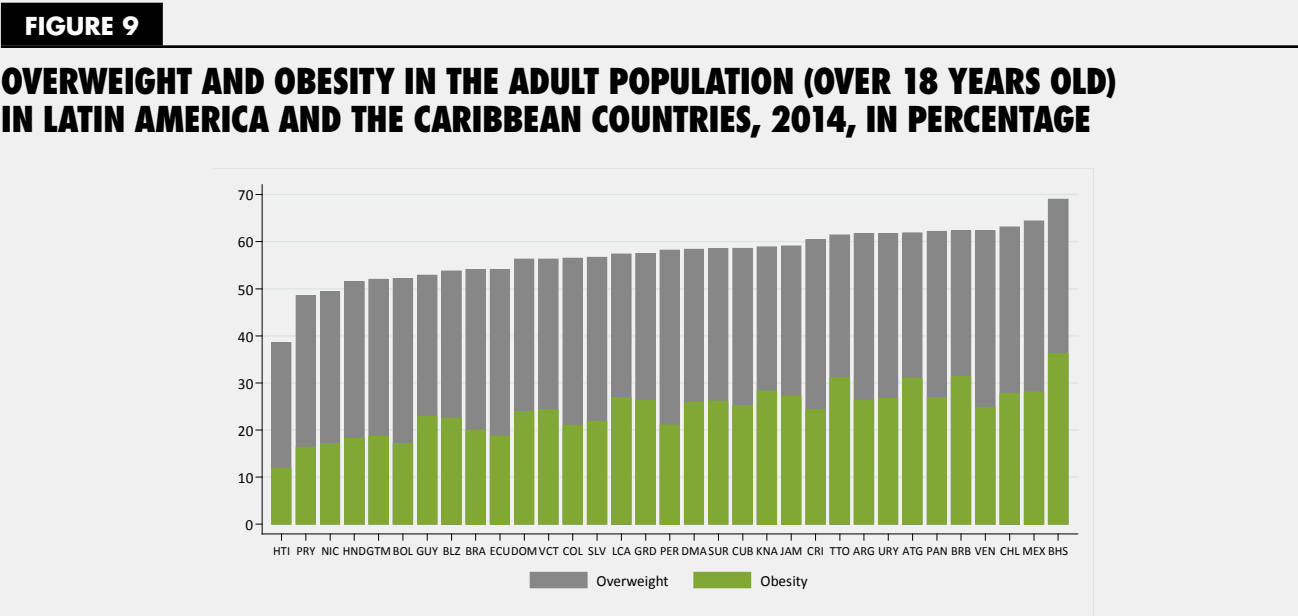


Source: WHO (online). Global Health Observatory (GHO) data

The importance of reducing the prevalence of malnutrition in children under 5 years old is due, among other things, to the fact that the consequences of malnutrition will have a greater impact on them throughout their lifetime (from early childhood to adulthood), affecting their potential for physical and mental development, and increasing the risk of developing NCDs in early stages of life.

The prevalence of overweight and obesity is especially worrying in those over 18 years old. It is estimated that around 58% of the population (about 360 million people) are overweight and that obesity affects 23% (140 million). Thus, being overweight

affects at least half the population of all the countries in the region, except Haiti (38.5%), Paraguay (48.5%) and Nicaragua (49.4%). Figure 9 shows that Chile, Mexico and Bahamas lead regional statistics with 63%, 64% and 69% respectively. In addition, it should be noted that the proportion of women with obesity often exceeds that of men, and in more than 20 countries, the difference is more than 10 percentage points. For example, in Antigua and Barbuda obesity affects 22.8% of men and 38.7% of women, while in Jamaica it affects 18.4% of men and 35.7% of women.



Source: WHO (online). Global Health Observatory (GHO) data.

THE CONSUMPTION OF ULTRA-PROCESSED FOODS WITH LOW NUTRITIONAL VALUE IS ONE OF THE FACTORS THAT PROMOTES WEIGHT GAIN

A high intake of ultra-processed products high in sugar, fat and salt, is among the most significant risk factors for promoting weight gain, obesity and non-communicable diseases. There are studies that show that there is a relationship between weight gain and an increase in the consumption of free sugars and, in addition, the regular consumption of sugary drinks has been associated with a greater risk of developing cardiovascular disease, metabolic syndrome and type 2 diabetes.

Recent evidence shows that consumption of ultra-processed products is five times higher in low and middle-income countries, compared to developed countries. Globally, sales of ultra-processed products increased by 43.7% between 2000 and 2013.

Meanwhile in Latin America⁴ sales increased by 48%, representing around 16% of total food sales, and presenting an annual growth of 3.1%, which is above the world average of 2.8% (Table 4).

It should be noted that this occurs in a context of the opening and deregulation of markets; rapid urbanization and the adoption of modern lifestyles; and the presence of extensive marketing. All this ultimately increases the availability and affordability of ultra-processed products, thereby promoting their consumption.

⁴ 13 countries of Latin America were included in this analysis: Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Guatemala, Mexico, Peru, Dominican Republic, Uruguay and Venezuela.

TABLE 4**RETAIL SALES OF ULTRA-PROCESSED FOODS AND BEVERAGES PER CAPITA IN 13 COUNTRIES OF LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN, 2000-2013, KILOGRAMS AND PERCENTAGE GROWTH**

Countries	Ultra-processed foods and beverages			
	Sales (kg)		Growth (%)	
	2000	2013	Period	Annual
Uruguay	60,6	149,3	146,4	7,2
Bolivia	44,6	102,5	129,8	6,6
Peru	40,2	83,2	107	5,8
Chile	125,5	200,6	59,8	3,7
Dominican Republic	70,3	96,6	37,4	2,5
Brazil	86	112,3	30,6	2,1
Mexico	164,3	212,2	29,2	2
Latin America	102,8	129,7	26,2	1,8
Colombia	73,7	92,2	25,1	1,7
Guatemala	90,7	113,5	25,1	1,7
Ecuador	73,4	87,9	19,8	1,4
Costa Rica	107,8	119,7	11	0,8
Venezuela	92	99,4	8	0,6
Argentina	194,1	185,6	-4,4	-0,3

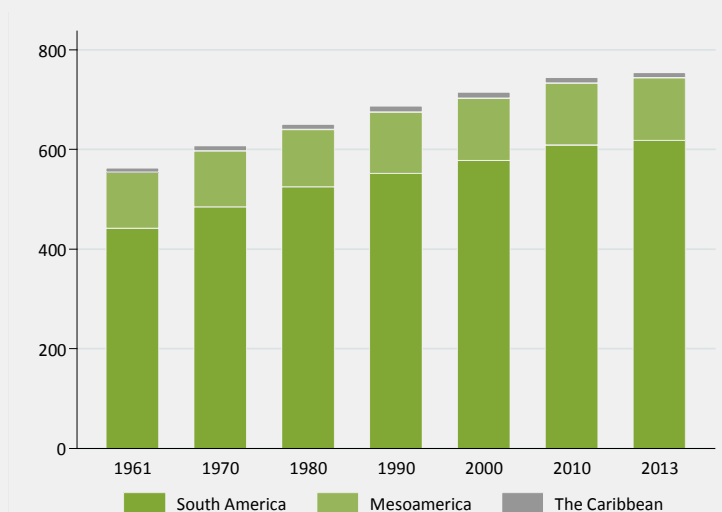
Source: PAHO (2015).

THE DEPLETION OF NATURAL RESOURCES IS ONE OF THE CHALLENGES FOR ESTABLISHING SUSTAINABLE FOOD SYSTEMS

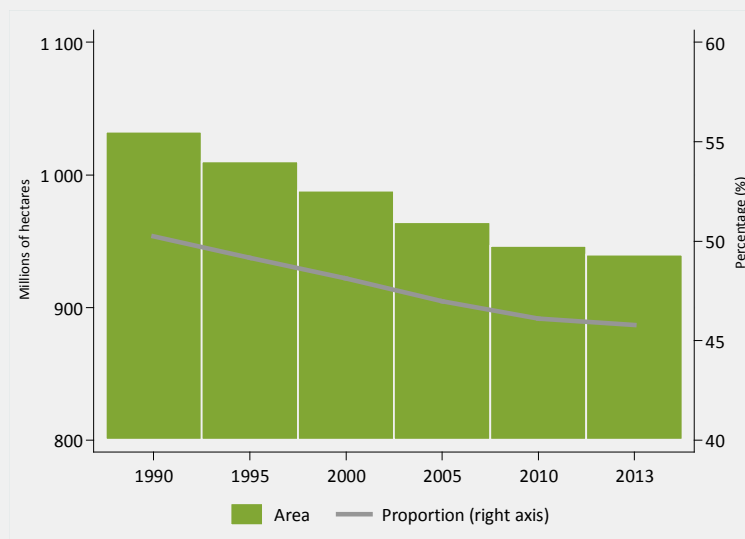
Latin America and the Caribbean has a wealth of natural resources, it has the largest expanse of arable land in the world and receives 29% of the rainfall. The area of land in agricultural use has increased over the decades: in the last 50 years it has increased by 34%, while around 46% of the region's land is covered by forests (Figures 10 and 11). However, while the area of land in agricultural use has been increasing, since 1990 the area covered by forests has decreased by 9%. Considering that the region's forests account for 22% of the world's forested area, this decline is a sign of environmental pressure.

FIGURE 10

EVOLUTION OF AGRICULTURAL LAND AREA IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN, 1961-2013 (IN MILLIONS OF HECTARES)



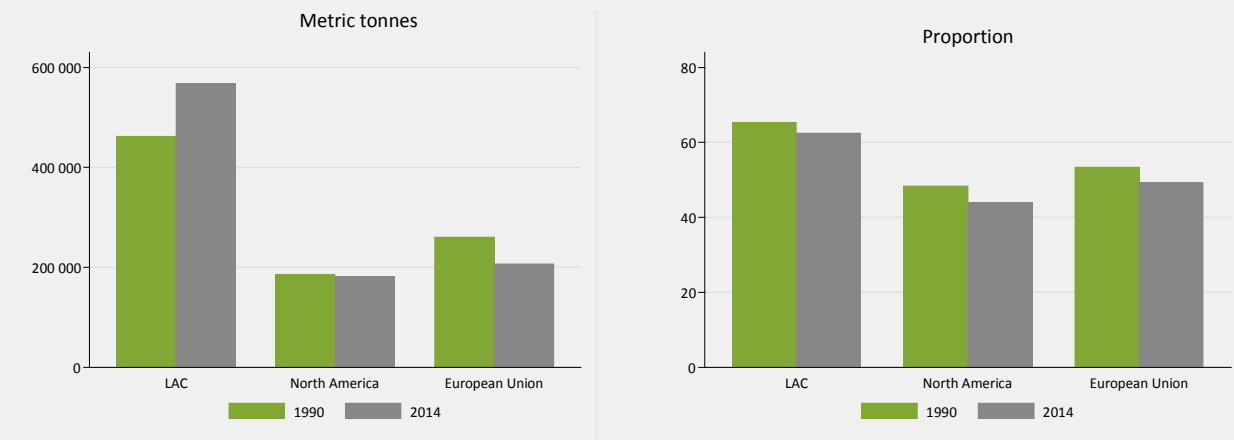
Source: FAO (online). FAOSTAT.

FIGURE 11**AREA AND PROPORTION OF AREA COVERED BY FORESTS IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN. 1990-2013, IN MILLIONS OF HECTARES AND PERCENTAGE**

Source: FAO (online). FAOSTAT.

These pressures, stemming largely from the current production and consumption patterns, are also acting on other natural resources. For example, water extraction in the region has increased at a higher rate than the world average, with most of it being used for agriculture. Generally, the expansion of production has been accompanied with intensive input use, soil degradation, biodiversity loss and deforestation. Thus, 14% of global soil degradation occurs within the region, while the rate of deforestation in the period 2010-15 was estimated at 2.2 million hectares per year for Latin America and the Caribbean.

Current production and consumption requirements have also had consequences for gas emissions; there has been a global increase in CO₂ emissions per capita since 1990. While North America and the European Union are the regions that have most reduced emissions per person, they are also the regions that most contribute to global CO₂ emission, producing around 17 and 7 tonnes per person respectively. Latin America and the Caribbean, meanwhile, is one of the regions that least contributes to CO₂ emissions with nearly 3 metric tonnes per person; however, since 1990 these emissions have increased by 28%.

FIGURE 12**AGRICULTURAL METHANE EMISSIONS IN SOME REGIONS OF THE WORLD (1990 AND 2014) IN THOUSANDS OF METRIC TONS OF CO₂ EQUIVALENT; AND PROPORTION OF TOTAL CO₂ ORIGINATING FROM AGRICULTURAL ACTIVITY (1990 TO 2014)**

Source: FAO (online). FAOSTAT.

Likewise, methane emissions (CH₄) from agriculture are also significant, and between 1990 and 2014 these have also increased. Of the total global emissions from the agricultural sector, 56% corresponds to methane, while in Latin America and the Caribbean this proportion is close to 61%. This highlights the urgency of implementing actions to incorporate technology and infrastructure for progressing towards more sustainable agricultural practices (Figure 12).

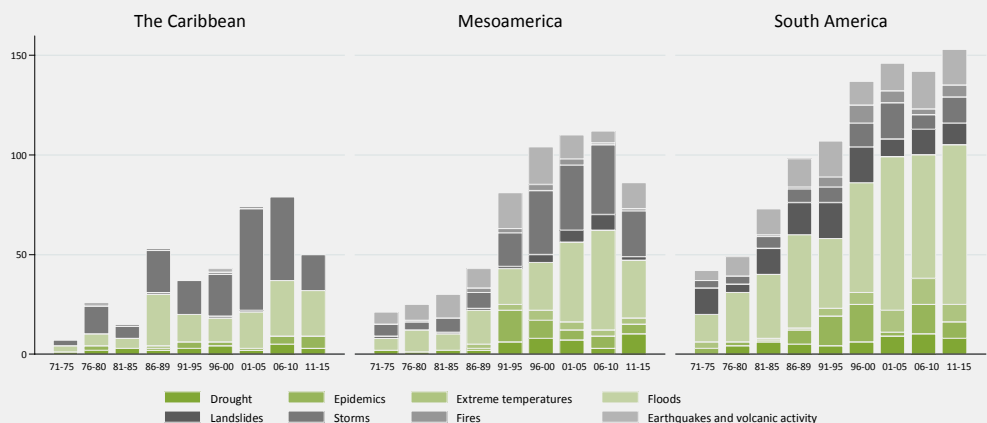
AN INCREASE IN THE FREQUENCY OF NATURAL DISASTERS IS A THREAT TO FOOD AND NUTRITIONAL SECURITY

It is a fact that the frequency of natural disasters has shown an upward trend (Figure 13). In Latin America and the Caribbean it is estimated that one-third of the population lives in areas at risk from natural climatological and geophysical disasters.

Often it is the rural population and small producers that are most affected, since their livelihoods are more often dependant on climate, they usually work on land with poor productivity using unsustainable practices, and they are poorly equipped in terms of preparedness and recovery in the face of disasters. Agriculture is especially vulnerable to climate change, since an increase in temperature will affect the quantity and quality of food and the availability of water. This will therefore have negative effects for food and nutritional security. It is estimated that affected households will, mainly, be headed by women and/or have limited access to land, agricultural inputs and technologies, infrastructure and education.

FIGURE 13

FREQUENCY OF NATURAL DISASTERS IN THE SUBREGIONS OF LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN, VARIOUS YEARS



Source: Prepared by the authors with information from CRED (online). EM-DAT: The CRED/OFDA International Disaster Database.

Globally, around 25% of the negative economic impact of natural disasters affects the agricultural sector. The crops subsector is the most affected, since it absorbs 42% of total damages and losses; while livestock farming represents the second most affected sub-sector, absorbing 34% of the economic impact in the agricultural sector. The fisheries and forestry subsectors are affected to a lesser extent, absorbing 5.5% and 2.3% of the costs respectively. These figures are worrying, since they affect the livelihoods of 2 500 million farmers around the world, who provide about 80% of food globally.

In 2015 natural disasters in the region were marked by the presence of the El Niño phenomenon, with frequent and intense rains in South America, and prolonged drought in Central America and the Caribbean. The magnitude of this phenomenon is comparable with that observed in 1997-98. On the other hand, it should be noted that this phenomenon is associated with the spread of cholera and mosquito-borne diseases, making it not only a phenomenon with important economic and environmental effects, but also a risk in terms of health.



CHAPTER 3

POLICIES TO ADDRESS MALNUTRITION THROUGH THE PROMOTION OF HEALTHY EATING

POLICIES TO ADDRESS MALNUTRITION THROUGH THE PROMOTION OF HEALTHY EATING

ESTABLISHING HEALTHY EATING PATTERNS IS A KEY FACTOR FOR ERADICATING HUNGER AND MALNUTRITION

The underlying causes of undernutrition, micronutrient deficiencies, overweight and obesity, and lack of micro-nutrients in the world, include rapid changes in dietary patterns that have occurred since the 1980s until now, that have significantly changed the eating habits of the population. While, in general, changes in diet have been associated with increases in family incomes in developed countries, which has meant increased demand for foods such as meats and dairy products and reduced consumption of cereals, in recent years it has been observed that the diets of the most vulnerable population in middle and low income countries have also undergone changes that are manifested, among

other things, in the presence of undernutrition and micronutrient deficiencies hand in hand with overweight and obesity.

Identifying inadequate diets as the cause of malnutrition is not by any means new; however, the characteristics of these diets are. Until some decades ago the presence of food consumption patterns with high quantities of edible oils, sugars and sweeteners, and increased consumption of calories and nutrients from animal sources compared to a reduced intake of pulses, cereals and vegetables, was a phenomenon associated with developed countries. However, since the 1990s the presence of this type of diet has become more widespread and now accounts for a significant part of the eating patterns of developing countries.

Among these changes, special concern is caused by the increased supply and consumption of ultra-processed food products. A recent study shows significant growth in the supply of such products in upper-middle and lower-middle income countries, in particular the sale of snacks, soft drinks and frozen foods. This phenomenon has spread so widely that an inversely proportional relationship can be seen

between GDP per capita and growth in the sales of these products: the lower the GDP per capita, the bigger the increase in relative terms of the sale of ultra-processed products.

Eating more appropriate diets from a caloric and nutritional point of view is key to addressing the current situation of malnutrition in all its forms affecting the regional population. In fact, healthy eating is the common factor that would make it possible to reduce hunger, undernutrition and micronutrient deficiencies, while simultaneously addressing the increasing presence of overweight and obesity. This implies that programmatic and policy concerns should focus on the determinants of household food consumption: What foods are available in food markets? Do the population have access to these foods? Are these foods appropriate for inclusion in the diet? Is the population willing to include these foods in their eating pattern?

THE COUNTRIES OF THE REGION ARE ENCOURAGING HEALTHY EATING THROUGH PUBLIC POLICIES RELATED TO FOOD SUPPLY AND DEMAND

Although the region has made significant progress towards achieving the integrated action of diverse public sector and society stakeholders in the fight against hunger, the role played by the different areas of public action for the promotion of healthy eating is not fully integrated into the policy agenda of Latin America and the Caribbean. However, whilst perhaps not yet intersectorally coordinated, the countries of the region do have diverse initiatives to promote changes in eating patterns.

These initiatives, of differing nature and implemented by organizations of various sectors, can be characterized into two large groups: a) those that promote the demand for healthy food, and b) those that increase the offer.

a) Policies for the modification of food demand and the promotion of healthy diets. This category encompasses all initiatives to change diets from the point of view of consumption, i.e., policies seeking to encourage the adoption of healthy diets whether through recommendations, such as those relating to dietary guidelines or nutrition education; or through regulatory actions, such as setting standards for food advertising, the labelling of food products or the implementation of fiscal instruments (taxes or subsidies) to encourage the purchase of healthy foods, and/or discourage the purchase of products high in calories, sugar, salt or fat depending on the case.

These instruments include *food-based dietary guidelines*, which are one of the most widely used policies for promoting healthy eating in the region, and are currently present in 28 of the 33 countries of Latin America and the Caribbean. These instruments play an important role in guiding people's food consumption habits, since they contain a number of principles related to the promotion of healthy eating. An analysis of 24 dietary guidelines in the same number of countries within the region⁵ indicates, among other things, that 23 of them include among their main messages the need to reduce fat intake; 22 promote the reduction of salt intake; 20 promote a varied diet and the consumption of fruit and vegetables; 19 advise the reduction of sugar intake; and 18 encourage physical activity. Similarly, food-based dietary guidelines are also the basis for the implementation of policies

that, up until now, have been concentrated mainly in the health and education sectors, and less in agricultural policy or social development. It should be noted, however, that dietary guidelines have been considered in the development of policies for food and nutritional security in Costa Rica, Brazil, Argentina, El Salvador, Belize and Guyana.

On the other hand, given that food prices are a major determinant of food consumption, and healthy foods are seemingly more expensive than their less healthy alternative⁶, the creation of *taxes specific to unhealthy foods high in sugar, salt or fat* is a measure which, although not yet widespread, has been used by some countries in the region to discourage the consumption of some foods and promote the consumption of others. The advantage of these policies is that, among other things, they create incentives for reducing the purchase of unhealthy foods especially in the low-income population, which is the most prone to modifying eating habits because of changes in food prices. In Latin America and the Caribbean there are to date only three countries that have implemented such measures: Mexico (in 2013), Barbados (in 2015), and Dominica (in 2015). A recent study regarding the first year in which the tax came into force in Mexico shows that the purchase of drinks with added sugar decreased in both absolute and relative terms, with greater preponderance in the low socio-economic sector, showing a decrease of 17.4% against purchases expected in accordance with the trend of the previous years, while in homes of middle and high socioeconomic status the reduction fluctuated between 5.5 and 5.6%. In the same period, meanwhile, there was an increase in the purchase of drinks without added sugar -i.e., not affected by the tax- of between 1.5 and 5.9%, with a higher prevalence in middle-income households.

⁵ Argentina, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominica, El Salvador, Grenada, Guatemala, Guyana, Honduras, Jamaica, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Dominican Republic, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Uruguay and Venezuela.

⁶ As noted in the Access section of the full version of the *Panorama*.

Among the determinants of food demand, the marketing strategies used by the ultra-processed products industry is one of the factors that can explain changes in the food preferences of the population, and in particular children. To address the negative effects of advertising on the diet, some countries in the region have begun to generate legislation and/or regulations for *regulating the advertising of food and non-alcoholic beverages to children*. In particular, six countries in the region have established national legislation regulating food advertising: Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Mexico, Peru and Uruguay. While such measures are among the most cost-effective policies within the usual range of interventions to prevent overweight and obesity, it should be noted that the effect on nutrition is lower than for other measures.

Similarly, another of the instruments implemented by the countries of the region is *food labelling*, which is one way of ensuring people's right to timely, clear, accurate and non-misleading information on the contents and characteristics of foods, and allows consumers to make informed decisions about the foods they consume. According to the *Codex Alimentarius General Standard for the labelling of prepackaged foods* the creation of specific rules allows the standardization of the nutritional information provided by the food industry for their products, avoiding confusing data; it avoids the presence of false or inaccurate messages about food; it allows consumers to make informed decisions with respect to the purchase of food; and it also allows compliance with international standards which can facilitate the export of food products. In 2015, nine

countries of Latin America and the Caribbean had rules for the mandatory labelling of food, while two had guidelines for voluntary labelling⁷. Following the global trend, the majority of these were mandatory for the back of pack (BOP labelling), although some were also labelled on the front (FOP labelling). Given that the implementation of standards for the labelling of food in the region is relatively recent, not many assessments have been made on the effects on consumption and/or in the food industry for either front or back of pack labelling. Among the implemented initiatives, Ecuador and Chile stand out among the countries that have established front of pack labelling (FOP labelling), to facilitate the identification of products that are high in sugar, salt or fat.

Interventions in food and nutrition education are public efforts related to providing information, education and capabilities that enable the target population to change its eating habits. This is one of the most widely used strategies in the region for reducing malnutrition in all its forms, and has different goals according to the country and policy: the promotion of breastfeeding and optimum complementary feeding practices; increased consumption of fresh and varied foods, including whole grain cereals, pulses, fruits and vegetables; and reduced consumption of high-calorie products, high in sugar, salt or fat. Furthermore, most of these campaigns are accompanied by the promotion of physical activity and healthy living in general. Among the diverse interventions, food and nutrition

⁷ The countries that have mandatory regulations are Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Mexico, Paraguay and Uruguay, while the Plurinational State of Bolivia and Venezuela have voluntary guidelines.

education initiatives in schools are one of the most common and most studied. A recent systematic review of policies implemented in Latin America showed that the best results were obtained by interventions that combined education programmes with other parallel measures, such as physical activity, changes in the nutritional profile of school menus and the establishment of institutional policies for the prevention of overweight and obesity. In specific cases such as Colombia, for example, it was observed that a combined strategy of food education and physical activity resulted in reductions in waist circumference, body mass index (BMI) and total body fat; while studies conducted in Brazil have confirmed that educational interventions on school children reduce the consumption of non-healthy foods such as fizzy drinks or energy dense foods, although direct effects on body size were not measured.

Linked to food and nutrition education interventions, several *school feeding programmes* in the region have been designed to address not only hunger and undernutrition, but also to prevent overweight and obesity: in Brazil, for example, the National School Feeding Programme (PNAE) has increased the consumption of fruits and vegetables among its beneficiaries by increasing the supply of these by more than 30 percentage points between 2004 and 2006. Similarly, menu designs can decidedly affect the consumption of micronutrients in school-age children: some studies in developing countries assert that they may have a beneficial effect in increasing the consumption of iron and thus reduce the prevalence of anaemia. In countries such as Costa Rica, Uruguay and Peru, meanwhile, laws and regulations have been established to promote healthy eating in schools, prohibiting the sale of ultra-processed products in school kiosks, or the presence of salt shakers in the dining rooms.

b) Policies for modifying the supply of healthy food. This category discusses how food systems

-whether producers or processors- are promoting the establishment of a suitable environment for healthy eating, mainly through food availability.

In this sense, family farming has a very important role as a provider of food such as pulses, fruits and vegetables; and certain types of animal based foods. In Argentina, for example, family farming is responsible for 82% of the production of goats (compared to 26% of beef), while in Brazil it is responsible for 87% of the supply of cassava and 70% of the supply of beans; similarly, family farmers are responsible for 80% of the supply of vegetables in Uruguay and 54% in Chile as well as 70% of corn and 64% of potatoes in Ecuador. However, this availability is not always reflected in domestic markets. Thus, *access to markets and the integration of family farmers in value chains* is one of the critical aspects to address in order to consolidate the role of agro-food policies in nutrition. Indeed, if we consider that family farming already supplies a preponderant proportion of the basic foods for the formation of healthy diets in the region (such as fruits, vegetables and pulses), emphasis should now be placed on ensuring that this supply is actually available and accessible to the population.

In response to this, one of the initiatives that has been most widely promoted in the region is the establishment of *short distribution channels in agrifood chains*. These channels are defined as marketing chains in which the distance between producers and consumers is minimal and even non-existent; i.e. there is a reduction in the presence of intermediaries, thus allowing agricultural produce direct access to markets. The implementation of short distribution channels varies depending on the reality of the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean. In Chile, for example, the presence of traditional local markets is one of the most widespread examples of a short distribution channel: it is estimated that these local markets supply 70% of the national market of fruits

and vegetables and 30% of the fish market. It should be noted, in the same way that 99.5% of the products sold at these markets are natural or unprocessed, i.e. they are the foundation of any healthy diet.

Another way in which short distribution channels materialize is through *Central Food Markets*. It is estimated that currently there are 291 wholesale markets in Latin America and the Caribbean, which are traditional places for the sale of agricultural products, but in some cases are also the result of more recent initiatives (from the 1970s and 80s, and even from the last few years). Despite their importance, the amounts of foods sold in these markets are lower than those of supermarkets and similar places. In this sense, it is important to point out the potential of central markets for commercializing healthy foods -as in many countries these are the main places for the sale of fresh produce-, making them an essential area for public action.

Finally, given that the concept of short distribution channels is related to the geographical distance between production and consumption, *urban and peri-urban agriculture* represents a good opportunity for implementing direct relationships between producers and consumers. Proximity to the place where food is sold allows production to adapt to local food demands, and the absence of intermediaries lowers transport and marketing costs, making it a valid alternative for the promotion of healthy eating. For example, some assessments of urban agriculture initiatives show that it increases the variety of food consumed by the producers, in particular vegetables, implying improvements in the intake of vitamins and minerals.

2016

Latin America and the Caribbean

KEY MESSAGES

- ▶ Latin America and the Caribbean must address all forms of hunger and malnutrition in order to meet the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), linking food security, sustainability, agriculture, nutrition and health
- ▶ In order to achieve the SDG 2 / Zero Hunger, Latin America and the Caribbean must eradicate undernourishment, which affects 5.5% of the regional population. The region must also face stunting and overweight, which currently affects 11.3 % and 7.2 % of children under 5, respectively.
- ▶ Overweight affects at least half the population of all countries in the region, except in Haiti (38.5%), Paraguay (48.5%) and Nicaragua (49.4%). In addition, obesity disproportionately affects women: in more than 20 countries the rate of female obesity is 10 percentage points higher than that of men.
- ▶ One of the underlying causes of hunger and malnutrition in all its forms are the inadequate food consumption patterns that exist throughout Latin America and the Caribbean. Encouraging healthy eating is a key factor to simultaneously fight hunger, malnutrition, overweight and obesity.
- ▶ The countries of Latin America and the Caribbean must strengthen and expand their public policies to promote the consumption of healthy foods. Some of the initiatives already under way include the regulation of advertising of ultra-processed products, food labelling rules and the specific taxes for sugary drinks. These should be complemented with policies to increase the supply of healthy food, such as public procurement programs and their connection with family farming and urban and peri-urban agriculture; school feeding, nutritional education and the implementation of short food production and marketing chains, among others.
- ▶ A profound change in the current food systems is needed to ensure their sustainability and ability to provide nutritious and accessible food for all, preserving ecosystems through a more efficient and sustainable use of land and natural resources and better techniques for food production, storage and processing.

PANORAMA OF FOOD AND NUTRITIONAL SECURITY

**HEALTHY FOOD SYSTEMS
TO END HUNGER
AND MALNUTRITION**