

**FOOD SECURITY AND NUTRITION TRENDS:
MONITORING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF ECONOMIC AND
SOCIAL RIGHTS WITH SPECIAL EMPHASIS ON THE RIGHT TO FOOD**

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By

Amdetsion Gebre-Michael, Senior Economist
Food Security and Agr. Projects Analysis Service
Agriculture and Economic Development Analysis Division
Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations,

Rome

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SUMMARY

This paper reviews recent developments in defining the right to food, which were undertaken as a follow-up to the recommendation of the World Food Summit (WFS) held in Rome in 1996. It also reports on (i) the methodology for and the results of the monitoring of long-term trends in the progress towards the WFS objective of reducing the number of the food insecure and undernourished population in the world; (ii) the mechanism for the monitoring in the implementation of the WFS Plan of Action to facilitate the achievement of the main objective; and (iii) the mechanism for monitoring short-term food supply and demand variations which impact on food security and nutrition.

An analysis of the long-term trends show that the performance in tackling poverty and under-nutrition widely varies from country to country. In the period 1990/92-1996/1998 only 39 countries have succeeded in reducing the number of the undernourished of their populations. In the majority of the developing countries, especially in Africa, the food security situation has deteriorated and the number of the undernourished has risen.

At the global level, nearly six years after the Summit, the number of the undernourished stands at 792 million people in the developing countries and 34 million in the developed countries. The latest figure for the developing countries reflects a drop of 38 million the number of the undernourished people than the estimate in 1990-1992. If the present state of performance in tackling poverty in most developing countries continues, the WFS objective of reducing the number of undernourished by half, and other human development international goals set for 2015 may not be achieved. A redoubling of efforts to implement the recommended action in the WFS Plan of Action at the national and international levels is needed to achieve the WFS main objective and other international development goals.

I. INTRODUCTION

Food security exists when all people at all times have physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food which meets their dietary needs and preferences for an active and healthy life. An essential condition for food security to exist is that people should produce food in sufficient quantity and variety and/or earn adequate income to purchase the food they need.

In rural areas, where most of the undernourished in the developing countries are concentrated, the basic causes of food insecurity and incidence of undernourishment include: (i) lack or inadequate access to means of production such as land, water and essential inputs; (ii) low productivity in agriculture associated with policy, institutional and technological constraints; (iii) high seasonal and year to year variability which is often linked to insufficient water or inadequate water control for crop and livestock production; and (iv) scarcity of off-farm employment opportunities, and inadequate and uncertain incomes. In the urban areas, the causes of undernourishment include (i) lack of employment and income opportunities; (ii) low salaries and wages; and (iii) high rates of inflation, which erode the disposable income of low income groups. The causes of food insecurity whether in the rural or urban areas are closely interrelated, and are also the root causes of undernourishment and poverty.

The activities of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) constitute part of the international effort to improve food security, nutrition and the standard of living of rural populations. One important activity of the Organization, which provides a basis for planning and policy decision making at international, national and local levels to improve food security and nutrition, is the collection, interpretation, analysis, and dissemination of production, trade, consumption of food and agriculture information including fishery and forestry. The accuracy and timeliness of the statistical data in food and agriculture and population, is critical for appropriate planning and effective policy making. It is therefore important to ensure that continued efforts are undertaken at international and national levels, to improve the accuracy, timeliness as well as the level of disaggregation of data to reflect local conditions.

Based on available data and information, monitoring the progress towards the goal of achieving food security for all, as well as developing policy and technical recommendation to enhance the capacity of individuals, households and governments, and all development partners, also forms part of the activities of the Organization. The clarification of the content of the right to food and its operationalization is considered useful to better identify ways and means and responsibilities in achieving food security for all. This paper summarises recent developments in defining the right to food, which was undertaken as a follow-up to the recommendation of the World Food Summit. The paper also reports on monitoring the progress of achieving food security for all.

II. INTERNATIONAL CONVENTIONS AND COMMITMENTS TO ERADICATE HUNGER AND TO ACHIEVE THE RIGHT TO FOOD

Hunger and undernourishment is both a symptom and a cause of poverty. Chronic hunger reduces the ability of a person to make a full use of his or her mental and physical

potential to work and earn income. It limits the ability of children to use their mental faculties and limits their ability to learn and gain skills thus affecting their future to earn income and to attain a higher standard of living. It thus blights the lives of all who are affected and, where it is found on a large-scale, as is the case across much of the developing world, hunger undermines national economies and overall development processes.

The prevalence of hunger and poverty and the need to eradicate it remains a priority concern of mankind. That every human being should have the right to food is embodied in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1948¹.

In circumstances where hunger is caused because of inequality in access to resources such as land, and, to opportunities which generate income and employment, realizing the right to food often proves to be beyond the capacity of the individual. Under the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), Governments have recognized their role, individually and through international co-operation, to ensure the right to food of those who lack it.²

Despite the concern of the international community, and its continued re-affirmation of the importance of the full respect for the right to adequate food, a substantial proportion of the world population continues to suffer from hunger and undernourishment reflecting a big gap between the standards set in article 11 of the ICESCR and the situation prevailing in many of the developing countries in the world.

The World Food Summit (WFS), held in Rome in November 1996, considered it intolerable that more than 800 million people throughout the world, and particularly in developing countries, did not have enough food to meet their basic nutritional food needs. The Summit stressed that the problems of hunger and food insecurity have global dimensions and are likely to persist, and even increase dramatically in some regions, unless urgent, determined and concerted action is taken, given the anticipated increase in the world's population and the stress on natural resources. The Summit adopted a WSF Plan of Action which envisaged an ongoing effort to eradicate hunger in all countries, with an immediate view to reducing the number of undernourished people to half their level no later than 2015, and a mid-term review to ascertain whether it is possible to achieve this target by 2010.

¹ Article 25 of the UDHR states that: *Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control.*

²Article 11 sub-art 2 of the ICESCR states that: *The States Parties to the present covenant recognizing the fundamental right of everyone to be free from hunger, shall take, individually and through international co-operation, the measures, including specific programmes which are needed: (a) To improve methods of production, conservation and distribution of food by making full use of technical and scientific knowledge, by disseminating knowledge of the principle of nutrition and by developing or reforming agrarian systems in such a way as to achieve the most efficient development and utilization of natural resources;(b)Taking into account the problems of both food importing and food exporting countries, to ensure an equitable distribution of world food supplies in relation to need.*

The WFS Plan of Action contains seven commitments and a series of objectives and recommended actions under each commitment to help tackle poverty and food insecurity and to achieve the target of reducing the number of the undernourished as set out in the Plan. Under Commitment Seven the Summit set the objective (objective 7.4): *To clarify the content of the right to adequate food and the fundamental right of everyone to be free from hunger, as stated in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and other relevant international and regional instruments, and to give particular attention to implementation and full and progressive realization of this right as a means of achieving food security for all.* In this connection the Summit invited the UN *High* Commissioner for Human Rights (UNHCHR), in consultation with relevant treaty bodies, and in collaboration with relevant specialized agencies and programmes of the UN system and appropriate intergovernmental mechanisms, to better define the rights related to food in Article 11 of the Covenant and to propose ways to implement and realize these rights as a means of achieving the commitments and objectives of the WFS, taking into account the possibility of formulating voluntary guidelines for food security for all.

In response to the request of the Summit, the UNHCHR, in collaboration with FAO convened two expert consultations on the Right to adequate food as a human right. Following a recommendation by the first Consultation, endorsed by the HCHR, the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in May 1999 adopted the General Comment 12 on the Right to adequate Food. The General Comment (GC) defines the normative content of article 11 (paragraphs 1 and 2) in the context of Adequacy and sustainability of food availability, and access. It also clarifies the legal obligations of states parties set out in article 2 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights, in relation to the achievement of the right to adequate food.

The GC underlines that the right to adequate food, like any other human right, imposes three types or levels of obligations on state parties: the obligation to respect, to protect and to fulfil. It points out that "Violations of the Covenant occur when a State fails to ensure the satisfaction of, at the very least, the minimum essential level required to be free from hunger". At the same time, it stresses the importance to distinguish the inability of states from the unwillingness of a State party to comply with Article 11 of ICESCR to determine which actions or omissions which amount to a violation of the right to food. In this context, it requires a State claiming that it is unable to carry out its obligations for reasons beyond its control to prove that it has taken "the necessary steps to the maximum of its available resources...and that it has unsuccessfully sought to obtain international support to ensure the availability and accessibility of the necessary food".

The GC however states that any discrimination in access to food, as well as to means and entitlements for its procurement, on the grounds of race, colour, sex, language, age, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status with the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing the equal enjoyment or exercise of economic, social and cultural rights constitutes a violation of the Covenant. It also identifies other situations, which can prove to be violation of the right to food.

To implement the right to food, the GC calls on states to:

- Adopt a national strategy to ensure food and nutrition security for all, based on human rights principles that define the objectives, and the formulation of policies and corresponding bench marks.
- Base the strategy on a systematic identification of policy measures and activities relevant to the situation and context.
- Ensure that the strategy should address critical issues and measures in regard to all aspects of the food system, including the production, processing distribution, marketing and consumption of safe food as well as parallel measures in the fields of health, education, employment and social security.
- Ensure that the strategy should give particular attention to the need to prevent discrimination in access to food or resources for food. This should include guarantees of full and equal access to economic resources, particularly for women, including the right to inheritance and the ownership of land and other property.
- Undertake measures to ensure that the right to adequate food is especially fulfilled for vulnerable population groups and individuals even when a state faces severe resource constraints, whether caused by a process of economic adjustment, economic recession, climatic conditions or other factors.
- Set verifiable benchmarks for subsequent national and international monitoring of the implementation of country specific national strategies.

In the context of the above, the GC also recommended that States should consider the adoption of a framework of legislation (specifying *inter alia* the purpose, the targets or goals to be achieved and the time frame for the achievement of the targets) as a major instrument in the implementation of the national strategy in the context of the right to food. It also stresses the need for developing and maintaining mechanisms to monitor progress towards the realization of the right to adequate food for all, to quantify the factors and difficulties affecting the degree of implementation of their obligations and to facilitate the adoption of corrective legislation and administrative measures, including measures to implement their obligations under articles 2.1 and 23 of the Covenant.

The GC emphasizes that the role of the United Nations agencies, including through the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF), in promoting the realization of the right to food at the country level, is of special importance. It underlined that the agencies (FAO, WFP, IFAD, UNDP, World Bank and regional development Banks) should co-operate more effectively on the implementation of the right to food.

The GC re-enforces the political commitments that Governments have made under the WFS summit Plan of Action to eradicate hunger and undernourishment with the immediate objective of reducing the number of the undernourished people to half by 2015.

III. WHO ARE THE FOOD INSECURE, AND THOSE VULNERABLE TO THE RISK OF FOOD INSECURITY.

The lack of access to food is mainly associated with poverty, and reflects the inability of people to produce food in adequate quantity and variety, or the inability of people to earn sufficient cash income to purchase adequate food or a combination of both. The people who are food insecure (i.e. people who lack access to sufficient amounts of safe and nutritious

food and are therefore not consuming the food required for normal growth and development, and for an active and healthy life) often include: -

- The landless rural poor, especially female headed households, with little or no opportunity for on farm or off-farm employment and income.
- Rural farmers without their own land but who farm as tenants, and surrender a significant proportion of their produce to land lords.
- Rural people including women with small landholding associated with a low level of farm technology which limits their productivity and total output so that what they produce is below their food consumption and other basic requirements.
- Urban jobless and unemployed people.
- Unskilled urban workers with low salaries or wages inadequate to purchase their food requirements and other necessities. In a situation where the income earner is only one member of the household, the larger the family size the more food insecure the household becomes.
- The elderly poor without pension or state or other forms of safety nets to support them.
- Orphans without inherited property and who live in situations where there are no state or other institutions to support them.
- Disabled individuals without state or other institutions to support them.

The incidence of natural disasters such as droughts or floods which lead to crop failures; the inability to purchase essential farm inputs such as fertilizers because of lack of financial resources; incidence of conflicts causing people to abandon their farms or other forms of livelihood; loss of jobs; sudden rise in food prices and overall inflation can cause people to be food insecure. The occurrence of such incidents is generally severe on the poor, and often lead to worsening of the food insecurity and undernourishment of such people. The people who are generally vulnerable to food insecurity because of such incidents include: -

- Subsistence farmers in drought and/or flood prone areas, without alternative sources of income.
- Small farmers who normally produce above their subsistence requirements but without food reserves or financial savings to protect themselves in the event of emergencies.
- Subsistence or below subsistence farmers in remote areas without market or job opportunities.
- Urban workers with low salary or wage income, whose purchasing power gets reduced because of sudden inflation or high import prices.
- Urban workers or employees who lose their jobs because of economic reforms and adjustments for a more competitive environment.

IV. MONITORING THE PROGRESS IN REDUCING FOOD INSECURITY AND UNDERNOURISHMENT

A. MONITORING OF THE LONG-TERM TREND

(i) Progress in reducing the number of the undernourished

FAO's latest estimates for 1996-1998 show that the number of the undernourished - people in the developing countries stands at 792 million, 38 million less than in 1990-1992,

the reference period for the estimate used at the time of the World Summit in 1996. The decline reflects a drop in the proportion of undernourished people from 20 percent in 1990-1992 to 18 percent in 1996-1998 of the world population. This gain in terms of decreasing the number of the undernourished is consistent with a steady long-term trend since 1979-1981 when almost 920 million people (30 percent of the population of the developing world) were undernourished.

The latest estimates also show that there are 34 million undernourished people in the industrialised countries and in the countries in transition. More than 75 percent (26 million) are concentrated in the countries in transition of Eastern Europe and the area of the former USSR. The remaining 8 million live in the industrialised countries.

The total figure of 792 million undernourished people in the developing countries reflects that the number of the undernourished in these countries was declining at an average of 8 million yearly in the first half of the 1990s. This global trend however conceals differing degree performances among the developing countries in their overall economic progress and in improving food security and nutrition of their populations. Only 39 countries had succeeded in improving food security and in reducing the number of the undernourished. In 30 countries the proportion either remained steady or declined slowly, offsetting growth in total population. In 27 countries including in those where the depth of undernutrition was severe, the proportion of the population suffering from hunger increased.

In the countries where the number of the undernourished has declined, the success is a reflection of a sustained long-term economic growth in the last two to three decades. In general, social indicators such as life expectancy, reduction in infant and maternal mortality also improved in the 1990s in continuation of long-term trends. Infant and under age 5 child mortality rates fell by more than 50 percent during 1960-1990³. Infant mortality fell by 10 percent in the period 1990-1997, reflecting a slow down in progress. Average life expectancy in the developing countries on the average increased from 55 years in 1970 to 65 years in 1997, but declined in thirty-three countries most of which are hit by the AIDS epidemic.⁴ The decline in maternal mortality, 90 percent of which occurs in developing countries is reported to be mixed.

Information available from countries that have conducted anthropometric surveys shows that an alarming high proportion of children in the developing countries suffers from the effects of undernutrition. A widespread chronic undernourishment of children in a given country reflects the seriousness of the food insecurity and undernourishment problem not only at the given period of time but also in terms of the future prospects of the country, since a bad state of children in terms of undernourishment would suggest low future productivity and reduced development potential. According to data obtained from surveys conducted between 1987 and 1998 two out of five children in the developing world are stunted⁵, one in three is underweight⁶ and one in ten is wasted⁷.

³ A Better World for All - Progress towards the International development Goals, Joint Draft Report by UN, World Bank, OECD and IMF, page 12

⁴ World Bank, Social indicators

⁵ Low height -for-age, reflecting a sustained past episode or episodes of undernutrition.

⁶ Low-weight -for-age, reflecting a current condition resulting from either inadequate food intake, past episodes of undernutrition or poor health conditions.

⁷ Low weight for height, generally the result of weight loss associated with a recent period of starvation or severe disease.

The numbers vary considerably among regions. In south Asia, half the children under five are underweight, compared with 33 percent in Africa and 21 percent in East and Southeast Asia. The incidence is lowest in Latin America and the Caribbean. With the highest incidence of undernourishment and a very large population of children under five, south Asia accounts for almost half of all the world's underweight and stunted children. These figures indicate that far more children in south Asia than elsewhere in the world do not reach the weights and heights that are considered to represent healthy growth.

The average global pace of decline of 8 million people yearly in the number of the undernourished during the first half of the 1990s was too slow to warrant the achievement of the WFS target of reducing the number to 400 million. In addition the slow pace of the declining trend appears to have been interrupted in 1998 by the severe economic and climatic conditions that affected several developing countries in that year. The year was marked by the impact of the South East Asian financial crisis and incidence of large-scale natural and man-made disasters. In the countries that continued to be afflicted by prolonged conflicts and large-scale natural disasters, the overall economic and food security situation and the scale of undernourishment, both in terms of the number of people affected and in the severity of undernourishment, may even have further deteriorated.

The Methodology used in measuring Undernourishment :

The measurement of the undernourishment is based on estimates of food intake. The key data used for measuring food intake and for estimating the incidence of undernourishment are those of food available for direct human consumption, derived in the framework of national Food Balance Sheets. Food Balance Sheets are constructed on the basis of country reports on their production and trade of food commodities, after estimates are made for non-food uses and for losses. Population data are used to express to express food availability in per capita terms.

The method of calculating the number of the undernourished involves the following steps :

1. calculating the total number of calories available from local food production, trade and stocks;
2. calculating an average minimum calories requirements for the total population based on the number of calories needed by different age and gender groups and the proportion of the population each group represents;
3. dividing the total number of calories available by the number of people in the country;
4. factoring in a coefficient for distribution to take account of inequality in access to food, and combining this information to construct the distribution of the food supply within the country;
5. estimating the percentage of the population whose food intake falls below the minimum requirement;
6. multiplying this percentage by the size of the population to obtain the number of undernourished people.

These calculations produce an estimate of the number of people in each country whose average calorie intake falls below the minimum required to keep the body going and perform light activity. Adding these numbers together yields a global estimate of the total number of the undernourished people.

To measure undernutrition - the outcome of prolonged poor food intake and/or absorption of the food consumed owing to poor health and/or sanitation - anthropometric indicators are used that tell what is happening to people's bodies. The indicators use to

measure undernutrition are the percentage of children under five years of age who were stunted, underweight or wasted at the time of the most recent survey.⁸

In addition to measurement of children's height and weight, other indicators of health and sanitary conditions can help identify and respond to nutritional problems. The health indicators used are life expectancy at birth, the mortality rate of children under five and the percentage of the population with access to adequate sanitation. Another important indicator is Body Mass Index (BMI), which is a measure of weight-for-height among adults by dividing an individual's weight (in Kilograms) by his or her height squared (in meters), and comparing this to generally accepted standards of thinness, healthy body mass and obesity.

The existence of high levels of all these indicators at the same time show the prevalence of severe nutritional and health problems, and conversely, when all the indicators are low, the nutritional and health situation is much less disturbing.

(ii). Location of the undernourished

An overwhelming majority of the undernourished people in developing countries live in Asia and the Pacific. This region accounts for almost two-thirds (526 million) of the undernourished people. India alone has more undernourished people (207.6 million) than all of sub-Saharan Africa combined. With India's neighbours added in, the South Asian sub-region accounts for more than one-third of the world total (294.2 million). About 220 million people also live in Southeast and East Asia more than 140 million of them in China.

Sub-Saharan Africa is home to almost a quarter of the developing world's hungry people. The problem varies in severity across the continent. Although West Africa has the largest total population of any of the African sub-regions, it has the fewest undernourished. By contrast, East Africa, with a slightly smaller total population, has more than twice as many undernourished people. The numbers in Central and Southern Africa are also proportionately larger, although both have much smaller total populations.

As these figures suggest, in addition to looking at the numbers of people afflicted by hunger, it is also important to consider the proportion of the population affected on a national and regional basis. This analytical approach spotlights areas where problems are most severe. It also helps identify groups of countries that may share common problems and common priorities for action.

Overall, more than a quarter of the world's chronically hungry people lives in countries where the prevalence of undernourishment is very high (35 percent or more). And in all but three of these countries, the proportion and number of hungry people have been increasing for some time.

The problem is especially severe in Central, East and Southern Africa. Almost half (44 percent) of the 340 million people living in the 26 countries of these sub-regions are undernourished. Only six countries elsewhere in the world have sub high prevalence rates - Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Haiti, and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Mongolia and Yemen.

Around 570 million undernourished people - almost three-quarters of the world total - live in countries where the prevalence of hunger is neither very low (below 5 percent) nor very high (above 35 percent). While Asian countries are about equally divided between the "moderately low" (5-19 percent) and "moderately high" (20-34 percent) categories, most countries in Latin America and the

⁸ In general, the nutritional status of children is associated with the food intake, health status and sanitary conditions of the population, though there are some instances where high percentage of children are underweight even where prevalence of undernourishment is low or access to sanitary conditions is very high.

Caribbean fall in the former. Six million undernourished people live in countries where the prevalence is very of extremely low, mainly in the Near East

(iii) The depth of undernourishment

The severity of food insecurity or the depth of undernourishment varies from country to country. Countries may have the same percentage of undernourished people, but the severity of food insecurity among the undernourished can differ significantly depending upon the level of poverty the individual is exposed too. The severity or depth of undernourishment is reflected by the shortfall in dietary energy supply of an average undernourished person, compared to the average minimum dietary requirement.

A comparison of dietary energy supply compared to the average minimum dietary energy requirement shows average deficits of the undernourished lie within the range of 130 to 400 kcal per person per day with figures varying considerably across countries of different regions and sub-regions. Based on the results obtained, the 151 countries observed had been classified as follows:

- low depth of undernourishment average dietary energy per person < 200 kcal/day;
- moderate depth of undernourishment average dietary energy deficit per person between 200 and 300 kcal/day;
- high depth of undernourishment: average dietary energy per person between 200 and 300 kcal/day.

The matrix below classifies countries according to the degree of food deprivation. This is done by considering each of the above mentioned classes of depth of under-nourishment with the three degrees of prevalence of undernourishment low, moderate and high (i.e. proportion of the population undernourished < 5%; proportion of the population undernourished between 5 and 19%; and proportion of the population undernourished \geq 20%). The matrix shows the number of countries for each of the nine possible combinations of prevalence and depth of undernourishment.

Number of countries, classified according to the degree of food deprivation

	Average food deficit of the undernourished (kcal per person per day) 1996-98			
	< 200 (Low)	200-300 (Moderate)	> 300 (High)	TOTAL
< 5 (Low)	51	0	0	51
5-19 (Moderate)	17	29	0	46
\geq 20 (High)	0	31	23	54
TOTAL	68	60	23	151

Source: FAO (CFS: 2000/2 - Assessment of the World Food Security Situation, paper prepared for consideration by the Committee on World Food Security, Rome, 18-21 September 2000.

B. MONITORING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE WFS PLAN OF ACTION

While monitoring the number of the undernourished and associated indicators show the state of food insecurity in terms of figures at national and global levels, what determines the progress remains the policies and actions to bring about sustainable food security at national and global level. The WFS Plan of Action contains seven major commitments with specific objectives and a wide set policies and actions recommended to be taken at national, regional, international levels as well as by the civil society in order to achieve the summit target of reducing the number of the undernourished by half by 2015.

The Summit Commitments relate to (i) ensuring an enabling political, social, and economic environment, (ii) implementing policies aimed at eradicating poverty and inequality, (iii) pursuing participatory and sustainable food, agriculture, fisheries forestry, and rural development policies and practices in high and low potential areas, (iv) ensuring that food agricultural trade and overall trade policies are conducive to fostering food security for all, (v) endeavouring to prevent and to be prepared for natural disasters and man-made emergencies, (vi) promoting optimal allocation and use of public and private investments to foster overall development and (vii) implementing, monitoring the follow-up of the Plan of Action. As part of its commitment to monitor the implementation of the Plan of Action, the Summit recommended that a mid-term review be undertaken to ascertain whether it is possible to achieve the target.

The Summit has entrusted the monitoring of the implementation of the Plan of Action to the Committee on World Food Security (CFS), which is an FAO Inter-governmental body, which serves as a forum in the United Nations system for review and follow-up of policies concerning world food security including food production, sustainable use of natural resources for food security and nutrition, poverty eradication and other related issues. The CFS meets annually. The CFS has agreed on a *modus operandi* to undertake its monitoring activities in line with the recommendation of the WFS. In this connection, the CFS has decided to undertake the monitoring of the implementation process of the Plan of Action in two clusters of commitments i.e. the "people-centred" (Commitments I, II, V commitments) and the "development-centred" commitments. The CFS has further decided that it will undertake two cycles of reviews of the implementation process, before the mid-term review in the year 2006. In its forthcoming meeting in the second half of this month, the CFS will review the implementation process of the first cluster of commitments.

C. MONITORING OF SHORT-TERM VARIABILITY OF FOOD SUPPLY AND DEMAND

As discussed in section III natural or man-made disasters, sudden economic crisis leading to shortages and inflation, loss of job opportunities etc. have a negative impact on the food security and nutrition status of people. When food supply availability is reduced and prices increase, the severity of such incidents are often felt more by those who are already food insecure or those who are vulnerable. At national level, disasters and or other events leading to economic crisis cause set backs in long-term economic growth.

With the view to providing early warning and to avoid negative consequences of emergencies, especially of the vulnerable groups in the Low-Income Food Deficit countries, FAO through its Global Information and Early Warning System (GIEWS) undertakes regular monitoring food crop production, supply and demand situations at the national global and levels. Through its GIEWS, FAO provides policy makers and relief agencies with the most up-to-date and accurate information, including warning of imminent food problems to assist the planning of timely intervention to save people from starving and undernourishment.

V. THE GAP BETWEEN COMMITMENTS AND ACHIEVEMENTS: WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE ?

Governments in the Rome Declaration on World Food Summit have reaffirmed the right of everyone to have access to safe and nutritious food, consistent with the right to adequate food and the fundamental right of everyone to be free from hunger in line with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. They have pledged to take ongoing efforts as set out in the World Food Summit Plan of Action to reduce the number of the undernourished to half the number, estimated at the time of the World Food Summit, no later than 2015. The General Comment, which is the outcome of the WFS recommendation under Commitment 7 of the Plan of Action, reinforces the Commitments of Governments towards the objective of attaining the right to food.

There remains a big gap, however, between the objectives set out in the WFS Plan of Action and in the international conventions, in the progress towards reducing food insecurity and undernourishment and in attaining the right to food. As pointed out in section IV, paragraph ..., the trend of the decline in the number of the undernourished falls far below the rate required to reach the Summit target. New projections show that the reduction in the number of undernourished persons in the developing world by 2015 would still be far short of the World Food Summit goal, although the projection is now somewhat more optimistic than at the time of the Summit. According to these latest projections, the number of undernourished in the developing world could fall to around 580 million by 2015 compared to the Summit target of no more than 400 million persons undernourished by this year. be reached towards 2030.

A region-by-region analysis shows that the number of undernourished persons could decline by 2015 to levels close to the Summit target in South and East Asia, while sub-Saharan Africa and Near East / North Africa would still be far from the target with Southeast Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean being in a middle position.

Overall, the new projections reflect mainly the continuation of long-term declines in the prevalence of undernourishment in Asia that began in 1969-71 in East Asia and in 1979-81 in South Asia. In the two largest countries in the world – India and China – slowing down of population growth and strong growth of GDP would bring about significant increases in food availability per person between 1995-97 and 2015. The weighted average of the proportion of the undernourished for these two countries combined is projected to decline from 17 percent in 1995-97 to 7 percent in 2015.

In sub-Saharan Africa, if the present trends were to continue and if actions are not stepped-up to improve food security, prospects do not appear so favourable in that region. Most of the world's poorest countries, where prevalence of undernourishment is high and opportunities for economic growth seem limited, are found in this region, particularly in the central, southern and eastern parts of the continent. While prevalence of undernourishment is

projected to decline from 33 percent in 1995-97 to 22 percent in 2015, the high rate of population growth means that the actual number of undernourished persons could increase slightly between now and 2015. Some very poor countries in East Asia, the Caribbean and the Near East exhibit similar characteristics and also have poor prospects for halving the number of undernourished by 2015.

If these unfavourable trends in these countries are to be reversed, and the food security and nutritional status of their population, especially of the poor is to be improved, such countries would have to redouble efforts to implement the recommended actions in the World Summit Plan of Action. A broad based development coupled with targeted programmes to assist the food insecure both in the rural and urban areas, which would propel the countries on a faster path of growth can only lead to sustained progress towards improvement of food security and nutrition. As underlined in the WFS Plan of Action, the need for multilateral and bilateral assistance remain crucial to support developing countries in their efforts to eradicate poverty and undernourishment.