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National and regional programmes for food security

KEY FACTS

- World hunger is increasing. FAO's most recent estimates (2010) put the number of hungry people at 925 million, an increase of more than 85 million since 1990-1992.
- Over 70 percent of the world's poor live in rural areas. As most poor rural households rely on agricultural production for a significant share of their income, increasing agricultural productivity is closely related to reducing rural poverty.
- Since 1994, 106 countries have participated in FAO's Special Programme for Food Security. More than half of the programme's budget has been provided by the national governments of developing countries.
- To date, 20 countries are currently implementing national programmes for food security, targeting close to 30 million people total. Thirty-nine additional countries are working to formulate their own national programmes for food security.

A nationally owned approach to ending hunger

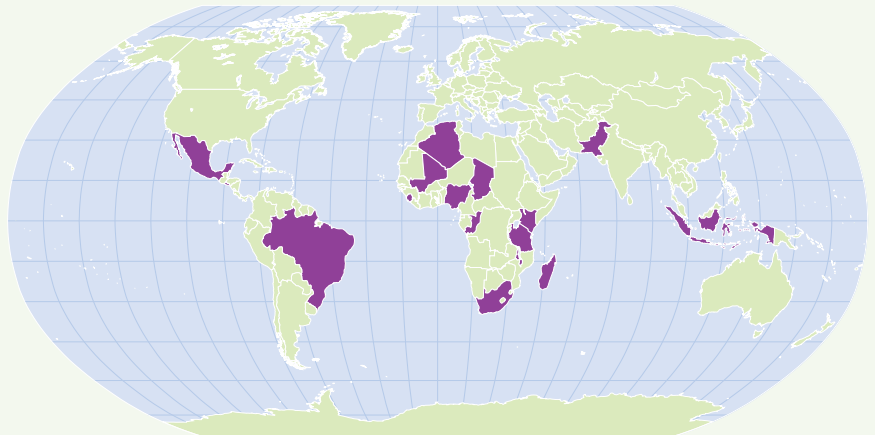
Launched in 1994, the Special Programme for Food Security aims to decrease rates of hunger and malnutrition. Initially, the programme targeted limited numbers of small-scale farmers, demonstrating low-cost technologies to boost food production and incomes of poor farming families. But with over 900 million people without adequate food, the effort needs to be multiplied many times over. This requires comprehensive action at national and regional levels.

From pilot projects to national commitments

Early lessons from the pilot phase of the programme led FAO in 2001 to support large-scale national and regional programmes for food security that are designed, owned and implemented by national governments and regional economic integration organizations. Efforts to reach many more farmers are complemented by policies and investments

to make markets work for all and provide direct access to food for those too poor to produce or acquire it by themselves. The programme also encourages investment in rural infrastructure, better nutrition, access to off-farm income generating opportunities and markets by rural dwellers, urban agriculture and social safety nets for the very poor.

Countries implementing National Programmes for Food Security (as of January 2009)



Source: FAO

How National Programmes for Food Security work

While each country decides the content of its own national programme, FAO promotes a systematic and large-scale approach to boost production, diversify livelihoods and build the capacities of the poor and hungry to produce or acquire the food they need.

FAO recommends that countries:

- use food security analysis in designing programmes;
- monitor impact and adjust policies to benefit poor communities during the life of the programme;
- invest in infrastructure to allow access to markets;
- bring together the public sector and civil society; and
- promote partnerships among international and bilateral aid agencies that share similar goals at country level.

In countries where national programmes do not meet all the recommendations, other complementary national programmes are expected to fill the gaps. FAO also assists the poor and hungry in immediate need through social safety net programmes.

FAO believes that the national and regional adoption of medium- and long-term action plans is essential to deal sustainably with the problems of food shortages and

hunger. Experience so far has shown that successful programmes benefit from political commitment at the highest level. The size of budgets and the diversity of funding sources for national and regional programmes in countries such as Algeria, Angola, Chad, Jordan, Mexico, Mongolia, Nigeria and Pakistan have demonstrated high levels of commitment, and continue to stimulate interest from funding partners.

Inside Regional Programmes for Food Security

Developed by regional economic integration organizations in response to the World Food Summit, with support from FAO, Regional Programmes for Food Security promote integration and agricultural development among neighbouring countries. Regional programmes seek to:

- support food security activities in participating countries;
- promote investment to improve rural infrastructure; and

- harmonize food quality standards and trade regulations to enable local producers and traders to gain access to cross-border and global markets.

Regional programmes are currently operational in the Caribbean Community, the Pacific Islands Forum, the West African Economic and Monetary Union and the region of the Economic Cooperation Organization.

Mapping, monitoring and evaluation

FAO has recently expanded its support to food security programme monitoring and evaluation. The aim is to enable countries to make better informed decisions on food security policies, programmes and strategies, as well as on resource allocation and targeting. A global web platform for mapping actions

at country level has been developed and is being pilot tested in Afghanistan, Nigeria and Sierra Leone. An online distance learning tool has also been developed for building member countries' capacity for assessing programmes' impact, and FAO is providing direct technical support to 24 countries.

South-South Cooperation: sharing knowledge

South-South Cooperation (SSC), a sub-programme of the Special Programme, is an essential vehicle for knowledge transfer among developing countries. Under country-to-country agreements, technicians and experts from emerging developing countries work directly with farmers in host countries, sharing their knowledge and skills. By January

2011, 49 SSC agreements had been signed and over 1 500 experts and technicians deployed. Efforts are presently under way for FAO to move towards strategic SSC alliances with select countries. A recent example is the agreement reached with China on the establishment of a US\$ 30 million trust fund in support of SSC in several host countries.



FAO assists the Government of Sierra Leone with farmer training.

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A trainer with Egyptian strawberry farmers in a farmer field school.

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