



联合国
粮食及
农业组织

Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations

Organisation des Nations
Unies pour l'alimentation
et l'agriculture

Продовольственная и
сельскохозяйственная организация
Объединенных Наций

Organización de las
Naciones Unidas para la
Alimentación y la Agricultura

منظمة
الأغذية والزراعة
للأمم المتحدة

E

FAO REGIONAL CONFERENCE FOR LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

Thirty-fourth Session

Mexico City (Mexico), 29 February - 3 March 2016

The State of Food Insecurity in the World (SOFI)

Executive Summary

- Latin America and the Caribbean achieved target 1C of the Millennium Development Goals (MDG), by more than halving the prevalence of undernourished people, from 1990 to 2015, as well as achieving the World Food Summit (WFS) target, by halving the absolute number of undernourished people during the same period.
- The region has more than enough food to feed its entire population and is a key stakeholder in world agrifood production and trade. Even though it has reduced poverty and inequality, both remain challenges in terms of food and nutrition security.
- While malnutrition caused by deficiencies has dropped in the last few years, Latin America and the Caribbean face an increase in malnutrition caused by excess, which has become a major public policy challenge. The coexistence of these trends, known as “the double burden of malnutrition”, represents major tasks for health and the quality of food, and is strongly linked to the efficiency and sustainability of agrifood systems.
- The positive results demonstrated in the achievement of international development goals reflect the political commitment of the region’s countries to eradicate hunger and poverty. This commitment is especially reflected in the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) Plan for Food Security, Nutrition and Hunger Eradication, which was adopted by all of the region’s countries in January 2015.
- Lessons learned by the region from this period as well as the implementation of the CELAC plan will be important in achieving the targets proposed by the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) recently approved by the United Nations General Assembly.

Please send any questions on this document to the Secretary for LARC 34, Tito.Diaz@fao.org

This document can be accessed using the Quick Response Code on this page; an FAO initiative to minimize its environmental impact and promote greener communications. Other documents can be consulted at www.fao.org



mp537

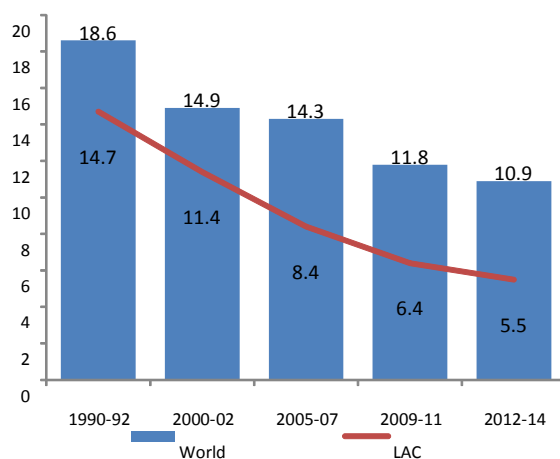
I. Latin America and the Caribbean achieve MDG and WFS1 targets

1. The latest FAO estimates indicate that about 795 million people are undernourished globally, which is equivalent to 10.9 percent of the world population not having enough food to lead an active life. Although efforts made have resulted in positive trends to reduce the prevalence of undernourishment in the world, they are not enough to achieve international hunger targets on a global level.

2. Since the beginning of the 1990s the number of people in the world suffering hunger has dropped by 218 million, which is equal to a reduction of 21.4 percent, in spite of an increase in the world population of approximately 1.9 billion people during the same period. This is largely due to the significant development of highly populated countries, such as China and India.

3. Latin America and the Caribbean met the two international hunger targets by reducing both the prevalence and the number of undernourished people to less than half, thereby achieving the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) 1C, as well as the World Food Summit (WFS) target. Consequently, the prevalence of undernourishment in the region fell from 14.7 percent in the 1990-92 triennium to 5.5 percent in 2014-16 (see Figure 1); this means that there are still 34.3 million inhabitants from the region who suffer hunger, however, over 30 million people have managed to overcome hunger since the period in which this measurement began.

Figure 1. Evolution of hunger in the world and in Latin America and the Caribbean, prevalence (%)



Source: FAO, IFAD and WFP. 2015. The State of Food Insecurity in the World. Rome.

4. Even though as a whole the result from Latin America and the Caribbean is positive, analysis at a subregional and national level demonstrates the differences across the region and helps identify existing gaps, thus facilitating the coordination of actions to consolidate progress and eradicate hunger in Latin America and the Caribbean.

5. Thus in South America the prevalence of undernourishment is below 5 percent, achieving both the MDG and WFS targets, which demonstrates that the subregion has made great progress in both reducing the number and prevalence of undernourished people, which largely explains the reason for the positive results for the whole of the region. Nevertheless, given the population size of this subregion, South American countries account for the largest number of undernourished people.

1 Unless otherwise stated, the contents of this section are based on: FAO Regional Overview of Food and Nutritional Insecurity in Latin America and the Caribbean 2015, Santiago, Chile.

6. Central America has also reduced hunger, but at a slower pace. The number of hungry in this subregion fell from 12.6 million in 1990-92 to 11.4 million people in 2014-2016, equivalent to a drop from 10.7 percent to 6.6 percent of the population over the same period.

7. The Caribbean is the subregion that has made the least progress. Currently 7.5 million people suffer hunger, only slightly less than the 8.1 million who were undernourished in 1990-92. The proportion of people affected fell by only 7.2 percentage points, from 27 percent in 1990-92 to 19.8 percent in 2014-16. Nevertheless, it is important to highlight the importance of the situation in Haiti for the subregion given that 75 percent of the undernourished population lives in Haiti, which highlights the urgency of implementing national, regional and international actions to address the situation in the country.

8. A national overview demonstrates that 17 of the countries within the region met the MDG hunger target: Argentina, Barbados, the Plurinational State of Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Guyana, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Peru, St. Vicente and the Grenadines, Suriname, Uruguay and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. Of these, nine countries have reduced their levels of undernourishment to below 5 percent: Argentina, Barbados, Brazil, Chile, Costa Rica, Cuba, Mexico, Uruguay and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. Additionally, in the year that the target was achieved, Honduras and Paraguay made significant progress, followed by Ecuador and Trinidad and Tobago, progressing to over 80 percent of the MDG target. Meanwhile, with regard to the WFS target, 11 countries have complied with it: Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Cuba, Guyana, Nicaragua, Peru, Dominican Republic, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Uruguay and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

II. Status of the dimensions of food and nutrition security in the region

9. In terms of food availability, Latin America and the Caribbean have more than enough food to feed their population. Furthermore, in terms of food availability measured in terms of calories, the latest FAO estimates indicate that there has been an upward trend, increasing 13 percent in the last 25 years, to more than 3 000 calories per person per day. While there are differences across the region, current food availability throughout the regions' countries exceeds the minimum calorie requirements of their populations.

10. This shows that the issues of hunger and malnutrition in the region are not due to shortages or insufficient food availability; on the contrary, increased food production in Latin America and the Caribbean has become a mainstay for strengthening the food and nutritional security of its inhabitants, and that of other regions in the world.

11. In terms of access to food, Latin America and the Caribbean experienced a long and continuous process of economic growth, resulting in a significant increase in average per capita income and a reduction of poverty, which is a reflection of both social and economic policies in the countries of the region. This context, in which GDP growth remained more stable, generated a great impact on the social and economic conditions of the population, expressed mainly in a reduction of poverty and an improvement in household incomes. However, from 2012 onwards the growth rate of GDP in the region has decreased and tended to align itself with the global trend. This happened in parallel with a reduction in the rate of poverty reduction in the region since 2012.

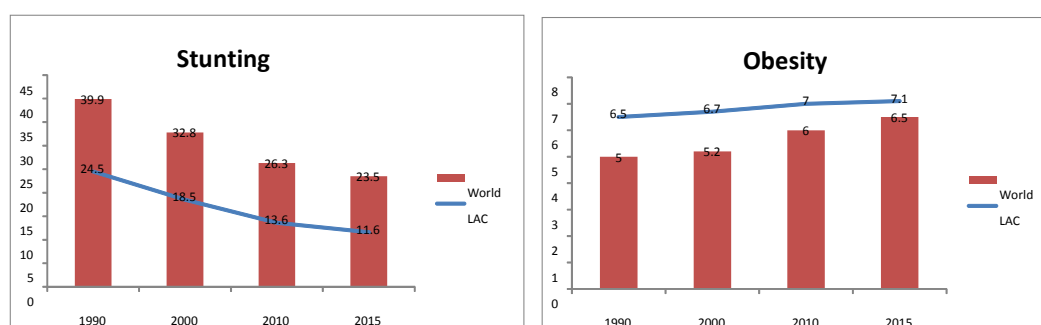
12. Although Latin America and the Caribbean have made significant progress in relation to poverty and inequality, both issues remain outstanding challenges. While in 1990 poverty affected 48.4 percent of the regional population, equivalent to over 200 million people, 167 million of those people were still living in poverty in 2014, representing 28 percent of the total population. Extreme poverty has also been reduced from 22.6 percent to 12 percent over the same period, which is a drop from 95 million people suffering these conditions in 1990 to 71 million people in 2014.

13. In terms of food use, the region has achieved significant progress in the fight against hunger and malnutrition caused by deficiencies, however, malnutrition by excess, represented by overweight and obesity issues, is becoming a growing challenge in the countries of Latin American and the Caribbean.

14. According to latest figures, the issue of stunting in children under five years has registered a positive trend. While in 1990 this situation affected 13.5 million boys and girls in the region, in 2015 the numbers dropped to 6.2 million, accounting for a reduction in prevalence from 24.5 percent in 1990 to 11.6 percent in 2015. While the region has followed the global trend, the prevalence of stunting in Latin America and the Caribbean has been lower than the world average throughout the surveyed periods.

15. Excess calories, sedentary lifestyles and changes in eating habits in favour of diets with lower nutritional quality have contributed to an increase in the prevalence of overweight and obesity. According to the latest estimates, overweight affects 7.1 percent of the population under five years in the region, which is higher than the global average, equating to 3.8 million children in Latin America and the Caribbean being overweight.

Figure 2. Evolution of malnutrition in children under five years in the world and in Latin America and the Caribbean, prevalence (%)



Source: WHO (online – Global Health Data Observatory. Available at <http://apps.who.int/gho/data/node.main>).

16. Ensuring the stability of food and nutritional security is increasingly important in order to consolidate the progress achieved by the region. Economic growth, rising incomes in countries, population growth and urbanization, among other factors, have placed increasing stress on agricultural and food systems, both from the point of view of production and consumption. These challenges can seriously affect the sustainability of food systems in the medium term, which could have serious implications for food and nutrition security.

17. The existence of high volumes of food losses and waste demonstrates the inefficient use of productive resources, which directly affects the sustainability of food systems and of food and nutrition security. Indeed, food which is eventually lost or wasted involves not only a waste of resources such as water, land and productive inputs but also the emissions and waste generated in the different stages of the supply chain. The food wasted and lost each year by the region could feed 300 million people, which clearly indicates the potential impacts that a reduction of food waste and losses could have on food and nutrition security.

18. In recent years the region has experienced considerable natural disasters causing major social and economic damage. Given the geography of Latin America and the Caribbean, there are some remarkably vulnerable areas to extreme weather events, which added to population growth, lack of territorial planning and fragility of livelihoods has helped increase their exposure to natural events and their impacts on food and nutrition security.

19. From a historical perspective Latin America and the Caribbean have made a lower contribution to global climate change in terms of the emission of greenhouse gases. However, the region is particularly vulnerable to the negative effects of climate change, which necessarily implies facing up to the challenges climate changes pose to the development of the region.

III. Main policies that explain the region's achievements in eradicating hunger

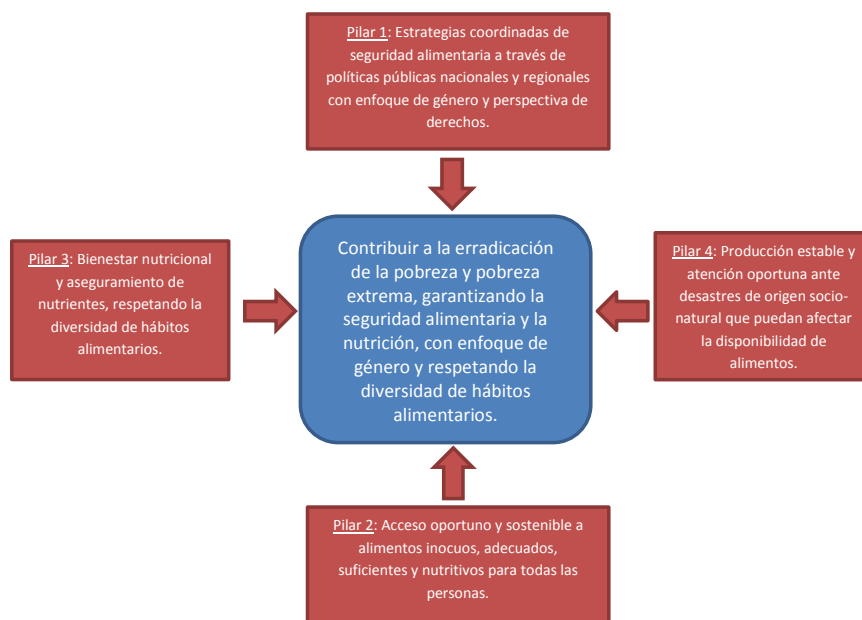
20. One of the most important characteristics of the region's 25-year success story is the political commitment at the highest level. This has permitted the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean to maintain the fight against hunger, while macroeconomic and political stability have sustained this process.

21. In 2005 the region expressed its commitment to eradicate hunger completely by 2025, through the Hunger Free Latin America and Caribbean Initiative 2025 (HFLACI), supported by all countries in the region. In addition, there have been several new initiatives within the framework of different agreements and integration bodies, as well as national flagship projects and policies such as Hunger Zero and Brazil without Misery (Brasil sem Miséria), and the National Crusade Against Hunger in Mexico.

22. The eradication of hunger and poverty is still at the top of the political agenda, which was clearly demonstrated in January 2015, when the Plan for Food Security, Nutrition and Hunger Eradication was adopted by the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC), the main regional economic and political integration body of the region, grouping all 33 countries. The Heads of State and Government also approved a special declaration on Food Security at the Fourth Summit of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) in Quito.

23. CELAC's plan is based on four pillars that seek to create a hunger-free Latin America and the Caribbean, through specific areas of action that respect the diversity of the political and social projects currently being implemented by the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean. It is also possible to note that the contents of the CELAC plan are the result of the conceptual and practical progress observed in the region with regard to food and nutrition security.

Figure 3. Outlines of the CELAC Plan for Food Security, Nutrition and Hunger Eradication 2025



Source: FAO Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean (FAORLC)

24. Once the issue of hunger was firmly established on the region's public agenda and the need to fulfil the human right to food was recognized, different stakeholders actively joined in the efforts of states to develop broad and sustained policies and initiatives over the last few decades. This was particularly the case for the role played by parliamentarians, civil society and academia in participating in the development of spaces for dialogue that have facilitated the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of public policies, and legal and institutional frameworks to achieve food and nutrition security.

25. The measures that helped make economic growth more inclusive in the region over several years were also a determining factor in the reduction of hunger. Due to improved macroeconomic conditions and the political commitment of countries, from 1990 until the present day, the region has increased public spending especially on social issues. In the two-year period from 1990-1991, public spending was 26.2 percent of GDP, while for the 2012-13 period, public spending rose more than 3 percent to 29.5 percent. Currently social spending represents a larger share of GDP compared to the early 1990s. Social spending in 1990-91 reached 13.8 percent of GDP, while for 2012-13 it represented 19.1 percent of GDP, increasing throughout the period and presenting an ever-growing share of public spending.

26. One of the main reasons for the increase in incomes and the reduction of poverty in the region has been the steady growth of the labour force, which has added more people, and especially a growing number of women. When entry into the labour market has been accompanied by improvements in labour conditions, especially in rural areas, the results in terms of hunger and poverty reduction have been significant.

27. As previously stated, in recent decades the trend in agricultural production is positive, and consequently, the region has established itself as a leading provider of global food, contributing to a significant proportion of international demand for the main commodities. Thus, food trade support

policies that have been accompanied by measures to improve the inclusion of all the stakeholders in the food system have proved to be positive for the food security of the region's inhabitants.

28. It should be noted that the region's agrifood supply comes largely from the countries belonging to it. However, over half of agrifood imports come from outside the region, demonstrating the clear potential to develop intraregional trade.

29. Finally, it is important to highlight the role played by social protection systems developed by the region to guarantee access to food for poverty-stricken populations suffering from food and nutrition insecurity. The different social protection instruments, including non-contributory, contributory and the promotion of improved labour market conditions, have proved to be fundamental in reducing vulnerability in poor rural households, helping them to make productive investments and boost local economies. Other measures include public initiatives such as conditional cash transfer programs (CCTP), school feeding programmes and their link to family farming through institutional procurement schemes.

30. These strategies are just some examples of political commitments that have placed the region of Latin America and the Caribbean in an advantageous position in terms of achieving the new Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), whose two main targets are the eradication of extreme poverty and hunger. The region has already committed to these targets through the adoption and implementation of the CELAC Plan for Food Security, Nutrition and Hunger Eradication.