

food insecurity:

when people must live with hunger
and fear starvation



The State of Food Insecurity in the World 2002

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The State of

2002

Food Insecurity in the World

About this report

This fourth edition of *The State of Food Insecurity in the World* (SOFI) provides the latest estimates of the number of chronically hungry people in the world and reports on global and national efforts to reach the goal set by the World Food Summit (WFS) in 1996 – to reduce that number to half the level reported at the time of the Summit by the year 2015.

The report is divided into four main sections. The first section, *Undernourishment around the world*, analyses the latest data on hunger. Other articles combine this data with other indicators to chart the fatal connection between hunger

and mortality and the strategic connection between combating hunger and achieving the Millennium Development Goals.

The second section contains a special feature on mountain people and mountain environments. This presents preliminary results from a multidisciplinary study carried out as part of FAO's contribution to the International Year of Mountains. The study used newly available georeferenced data to estimate the number of mountain people vulnerable to food insecurity.

In the third section, *Towards the Summit commitments*, a series of articles discusses approaches to fulfilling the commitments in the WFS Plan of Action.

Finally, as in every edition of SOFI, two sets of tables provide detailed information on the prevalence in developing countries and countries in transition of undernourishment and on food availability, dietary diversification, poverty, health and child nutritional status.

SOFI draws on the ongoing work of FAO and its international partners in monitoring the nutritional status and analysing the vulnerability of populations worldwide. It represents part of FAO's contribution to the Inter-Agency Food Insecurity and Vulnerability Information and Mapping Systems initiative.

Food Insecurity and Vulnerability Information and Mapping Systems



I am very pleased to associate the Inter-Agency Working Group on FIVIMS (IAWG-FIVIMS) with this fourth edition of *The State of Food Insecurity in the World*. The information contained in this publication represents a substantial contribution to the objectives of FIVIMS, namely, to:

- increase global attention to problems of food insecurity;
- improve data quality and analysis through the development of new tools and capacity-building in developing countries;
- promote effective and better directed action aimed at reducing food insecurity and poverty;
- promote donor collaboration on food security information systems at the global and country levels;
- improve access to information through networking and sharing.

As the membership list indicates, the IAWG-FIVIMS represents diverse perspectives and interests. But we all share a commitment to reduce global food insecurity and vulnerability and to build sustainable livelihoods for the poor. Increasingly, the sustainable livelihood approach is seen as providing a framework for monitoring and assessing both food insecurity and vulnerability and the direction and impact of our efforts to alleviate them. Some examples of vulnerable livelihoods and vulnerable environments are detailed in SOFI, with a particular focus on mountain people in keeping with the designation of 2002 as the International Year of Mountains.

The international development environment in which IAWG-FIVIMS operates has changed markedly since the 1996 World Food Summit. The Millennium Development Goal (MDG) process has assumed a prominent role in development strategies and actions. The IAWG-FIVIMS looks forward to being fully involved with the MDG initiative and with efforts to monitor its implementation and impact at global and national levels.

As with previous issues of SOFI, IAWG members commend the FAO SOFI team for an excellent report on the state of food insecurity in the world.

Krishna Belbase (UNICEF)
Chair, IAWG-FIVIMS

IAWG-FIVIMS membership

Bilateral aid and technical agencies

Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID)
Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA)
European Commission (EC)
German Agency for Technical Cooperation (GTZ)
United States Agency for International Development (USAID)
United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)

United Nations and Bretton Woods agencies

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)
International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD)
International Labour Organization (ILO)
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World Resources Institute (WRI)

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Southern African Development Community (SADC)
Permanent Interstate Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel (CILSS)

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Foreword

Towards the World Food Summit target

TO PUT IT BLUNTLY, the state of food security in the world is not good. In each of the three previous editions of this report, the basic message has been essentially the same. Each year, we have reported a mixture of good news and bad news. The good news has been that the number of undernourished people in the developing world continues to decline. The bad news has been that the decline has been too slow, that our progress has been falling far short of the pace needed to reduce the number of hungry people by half by the year 2015 – the goal set at the World Food Summit (WFS) in 1996 and echoed in the Millennium Development Goals.

This year we must report that progress has virtually ground to a halt. Our latest estimates, based on data from the years 1998–2000, put the number of undernourished people in the world at 840 million, of whom 799 million live in developing countries. That figure represents a decrease of barely 2.5 million per year over the eight years since 1990–92, the period used as the starting point for the drive launched at the World Food Summit.

If we continue at the current pace, we will reach the WFS goal more than 100 years late, closer to the year 2150 than to the year 2015. Clearly, that is simply unacceptable.

To put it another way, in order to make up for the lagging progress to date and reach the World Food Summit goal on time, we must now strive to reduce the number of hungry people by 24 million each year from now until 2015, almost

“We do not have the excuse that we cannot grow enough or that we do not know enough about how to eliminate hunger.”

exactly ten times the pace achieved over the past eight years. That is simply imperative.

Daunting as the task may sound, achieving this accelerated rate of progress is also eminently possible. Quite frankly, the question is not whether we can afford to invest the resources, the energy, and the political commitment required to fight hunger. Rather, we must ask whether we can afford not to do so. The answer is that we cannot.

The price we pay for this lack of progress is heavy indeed. The hungry themselves pay most immediately and most painfully. But the costs are also crippling for their communities, their countries and the global village that we all inhabit and share.

Articles in this report document the crushing cost that hunger inflicts on the millions of people who experience it, measured in stunted physical and mental development, constricted opportunities, blighted health, shortened life expectancy, premature death. To cite just one example, every year, 6 million children under the age of five die as a result of hunger and malnutrition. That is roughly equivalent to the entire population of children under five in Japan, or in France and Italy combined.

Other articles in this report demonstrate that the reduced productivity, truncated working lives and suffocated opportunities of 799 million hungry people in the developing world hamstring economic progress and fuel environmental degradation and conflict at the national and international levels.

Clearly, the cost of inaction is prohibitive. Fortunately, the cost of progress is both calculable and affordable. The currency most urgently needed is not dollars but commitment.

At a side event of the World Food Summit: *five years later*, in June 2002, the FAO Secretariat presented a draft outline for an Anti-Hunger Programme, a strategic, cost-effective framework for national and international action to reduce

“The cost of inaction is prohibitive. The cost of progress is both calculable and affordable.”

hunger through agricultural and rural development and wider access to food.

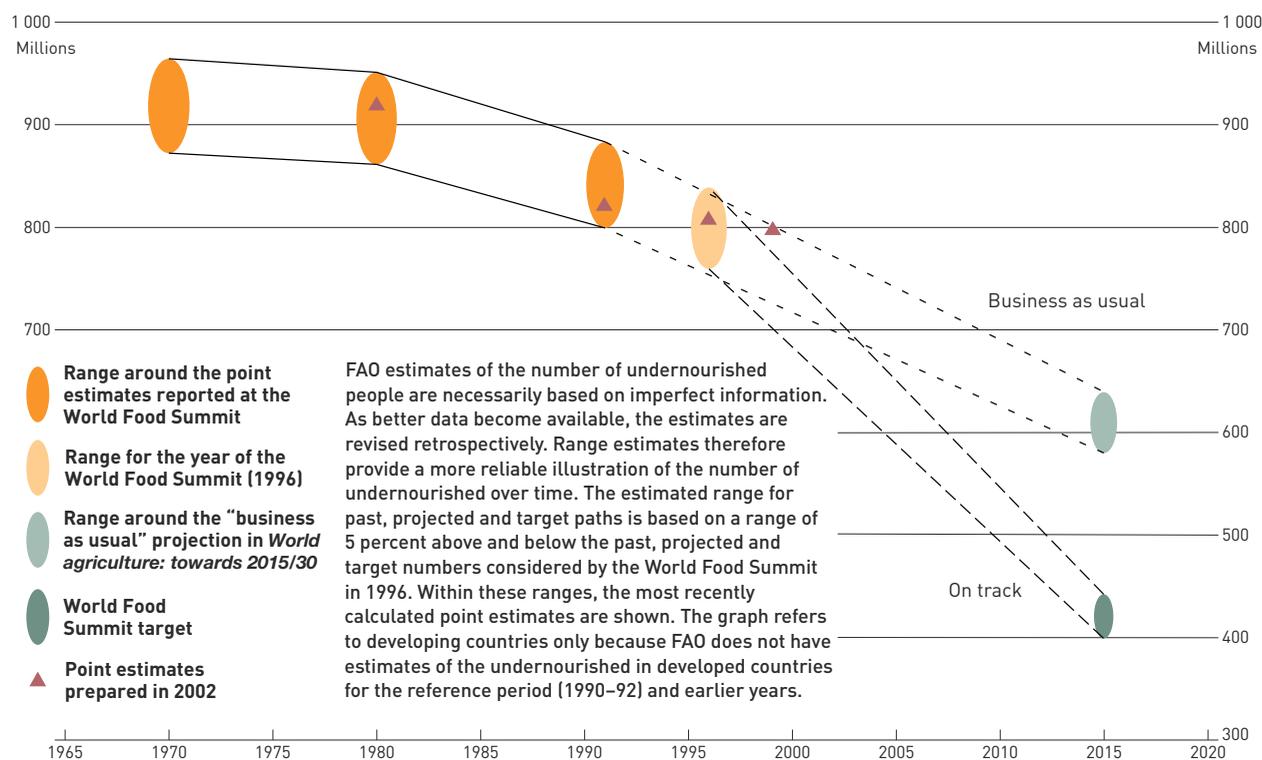
According to this proposal, public investment of US\$24 billion a year would be enough to jump-start an accelerated campaign against hunger that could reach the WFS goal. Taken in perspective, the price tag is startlingly low, dwarfed by the more than US\$300 billion that the OECD nations transferred to support their own agriculture in 2001. As the economist Jeffrey Sachs has pointed out, in comparison to a global economy measured in the trillions, US\$24 billion could be considered a “rounding error”, representing barely five cents for every US\$100 of income.

And the payoff would be impressively high. FAO has estimated that achieving the WFS goal would yield at least US\$120 billion per year in benefits as a result of longer, healthier and more productive lives for several hundred million people freed from hunger.

The cost of the programme would be widely shared. Of various conceivable options, the Anti-Hunger Programme assumes that the costs would be shared equally, 50-50, between the international donor community and the developing countries themselves. On average, across all developing regions, this would require a 20 percent increase in developing countries’ budgets for agricultural and rural development. For the developed countries and international financing institutions, it would represent a doubling of concessional funding to agricultural and rural development. This would restore official development assistance to the level before a steep decline in the 1990s that hit hardest in precisely those countries



Number of undernourished in the developing world: observed and projected ranges compared with the World Food Summit target



where hunger is most widespread, as documented in this report.

And what would this investment buy? The Anti-Hunger Programme outlines a twin-track approach to reduce the number of hungry people rapidly and sustainably. It would provide access to food and deliver immediate relief to those most desperately in need, more than 200 million hard-core hungry people. And it would channel investment into sustainable agriculture and rural development, elevating productivity, incomes and hope in the rural areas in the developing world where more than three-quarters of the world's poor and hungry people live. The proposal also suggests key elements of a policy framework that would maximize the impact of these investments by inducing complementary flows of private investment and enabling the poor and hungry to realize their full development potential.

We do not have the excuse that we

cannot grow enough or that we do not know enough about how to eliminate hunger. What remains to be proven is that we care enough, that our expressions of concern in international fora are more than rhetoric, that we will no longer accept and ignore the suffering of 840 million hungry people in the world or the daily death toll of 25 000 victims of hunger and poverty.

We already produce more than enough food to provide an adequate diet for everyone. The Plan of Action of the 1996 World Food Summit set out clearly what needs to be done. The Anti-Hunger Programme suggests practical, affordable measures for translating the Plan of Action's sound concepts and worthy principles into immediate, effective action.

There can be no excuse for further delay. Hunger can be defeated. But only if we demonstrate our commitment by mobilizing a concerted and adequately financed campaign. Governments, the

international community, civil society and non-governmental organizations and the private sector have to work together, as an international alliance against hunger, to ensure that all people enjoy the most fundamental of human rights – the right to food that is essential to their very survival and existence.

Jacques Diouf
FAO Director-General