



## State of Food Insecurity in the World *IN BRIEF*

### World hunger falls but 805 million still chronically undernourished



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*“Political commitment of governments is increasingly being translated into comprehensive and effective action, with strengthened engagement of non-state actors.*

*These efforts are bringing the goal of achieving food security in our lifetime closer to reality.”*

José Graziano da Silva, FAO Director-General

### Key messages

The latest FAO estimates indicate that global hunger reduction continues: about **805 million people are estimated to be chronically undernourished in 2012–14**, down more than 100 million over the last decade, and 209 million lower than in 1990–92. In the same period, the prevalence of undernourishment has fallen from 18.7 to 11.3 percent globally and from 23.4 to 13.5 percent for developing countries.

Since 1990–92, **63 countries have reached the hunger target of MDG-1 and 25 countries have achieved the more stringent WFS target**. Of the 63 developing countries, 11 already had undernourishment levels below 5 percent (the methodological limit that can assure significance of the results different from zero) in 1990–1992 and have been able to keep it in that interval, and are therefore not the prime focus of the 2014 report.

The figures demonstrate that **the hunger target of the Millennium Development Goal** – of halving the proportion of undernourished people in developing countries by 2015 – **is within reach**.

Despite overall progress, marked differences across regions persist. **Latin America and the Caribbean have made the greatest overall progress** in increasing food security with modest progress in sub-Saharan Africa and Western Asia, which have been afflicted by natural disasters and conflict.

**Sustained political commitment at the highest level, with food security and nutrition as top priorities, is a prerequisite for hunger eradication**. The case studies of the State of Food Insecurity in the World 2014 report show that regions such as Africa and the Latin America and the Caribbean, as well as individual countries have strengthened their political commitment to food security and nutrition.

**Hunger reduction requires an integrated approach**, and needs to include: public and private investments to raise agricultural productivity; better access to inputs, land, services, technologies and markets; measures to promote rural development; social protection for the most vulnerable, including strengthening their resilience to conflicts and natural disasters; and specific nutrition programmes, particularly to address micronutrient deficiencies in mothers and children under five.

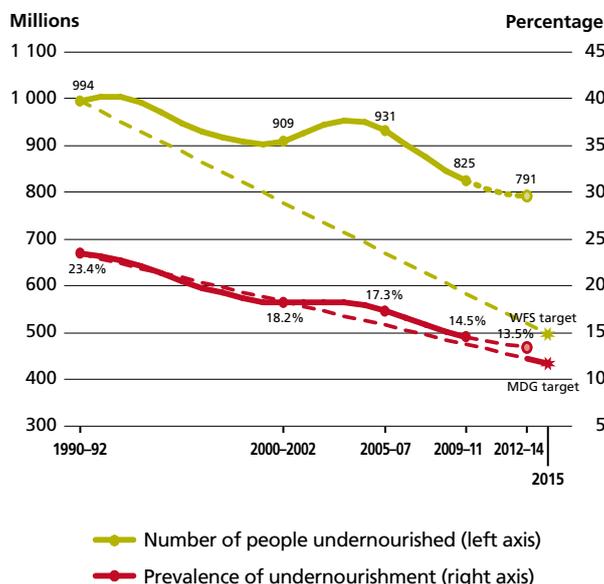
# Progress

Important progress in eradicating hunger has been made according to the latest FAO estimates. Developing countries, which account for the vast majority of global undernourishment, have seen the lion's share of progress: 791 million people in developing countries were estimated to be chronically hungry in 2012–14, down by 203 million since 1990–92.

According to the *State of Food Insecurity in the World 2014 (SOFI 2014)* report, **China alone has reduced the number of undernourished people by 138 million in this period**, while the **10 countries that have achieved greatest success in reducing the total number of hungry people in proportion to their national population are: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Brazil, Cuba, Georgia, Ghana, Kuwait, Saint Vincent and Grenadines, Thailand and Venezuela.**

Despite this overall progress in developing countries as a whole, there is still considerable room to reduce undernourishment and improve food security. SOFI 2014 shows that advances in reducing world hunger require political commitment expressed through appropriate policies, programmes, legal frameworks and sufficient resources. SOFI 2014 highlights examples of successful national efforts to reduce hunger, but also identifies factors that can act as bottlenecks to progress.

The trajectory of undernourishment in developing regions: actual and projected progress towards the MDG and WFS targets



Note: Data for 2012–14 refer to provisional estimates.  
Source: FAO.

**Countries that met the MDG-1 goal of halving the proportion of hungry people include:** Algeria, Angola, Argentina, Bangladesh, Barbados, Benin, Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, China, Dominican Republic, Egypt, Ethiopia, Fiji, Gabon, Gambia, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kiribati, Lebanon, Malawi, Malaysia, Maldives, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Morocco, Niger, Nigeria, Panama, Philippines, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Togo, Tunisia, Turkey, and United Arab Emirates.

**Countries that achieved both the MDG-1 of halving the proportion of hungry people as well as the WFS goal of halving the absolute number of hungry people include:** Armenia, Azerbaijan, Brazil, Cameroon, Chile, Cuba, Djibouti, Georgia, Ghana, Guyana, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Mali, Myanmar, Nicaragua, Peru, Republic of Korea, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Samoa, Sao Tome and Principe, Thailand, Turkmenistan, Uruguay, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of) and Viet Nam.

**Countries that had undernourishment levels below 5 percent in 1990-1992 and have been able to keep it in that interval include:** Argentina, Barbados, Brunei Darussalam, Egypt, Kazakhstan, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Tunisia, Turkey, United Arab Emirates

Global progress in hunger reduction mainly reflects achievements made in the countries that have already met the MDG 1c target of halving the proportion of undernourished people by 2015; of these 63 countries (out of a total of 136 countries and territories monitored by FAO), 25 have already met the more ambitious World Food Summit (WFS) goal of halving the number of undernourished people between 1990 and 2015.

Regional efforts to reduce hunger are gaining traction, especially in Latin America and the Caribbean and Africa. **In July 2014, at the African Union summit in Malabo, Equatorial Guinea, African Heads of State committed to end hunger on the continent by 2025. Last year, at the first summit of the Community of Latin America and the Caribbean States (CELAC), Heads of State and Government endorsed the 2025 zero hunger target** by reaffirming a regional commitment to the Hunger-Free Latin America and the Caribbean Initiative to end hunger by 2025, launched in 2005. Together, these two regions include nearly 90 states and over 1.5 billion people. This commitment sends a powerful message to their citizens and to the rest of the world.

The decision of the Latin American and Caribbean Community to end hunger by 2025 underpins the national and regional action to promote food security that has resulted in the achievement for the region as a whole of the First Millennium Development Goal hunger target. In addition, Latin America has also met the World Food Summit target.

The African commitment to end hunger by 2025 also acts on this principle and strengthens the ongoing efforts within the framework of the Africa-led Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). The commitment made at Malabo also builds on the region's decision to increase South-South Cooperation efforts within Africa, as signalled by the Africa Solidarity Trust Fund for Food Security established in 2013.

**FAO Director-General José Graziano da Silva** welcomed the increased commitment and action to promote sustainable food security and the fact that many countries and regions are responding to the Zero Hunger Challenge:

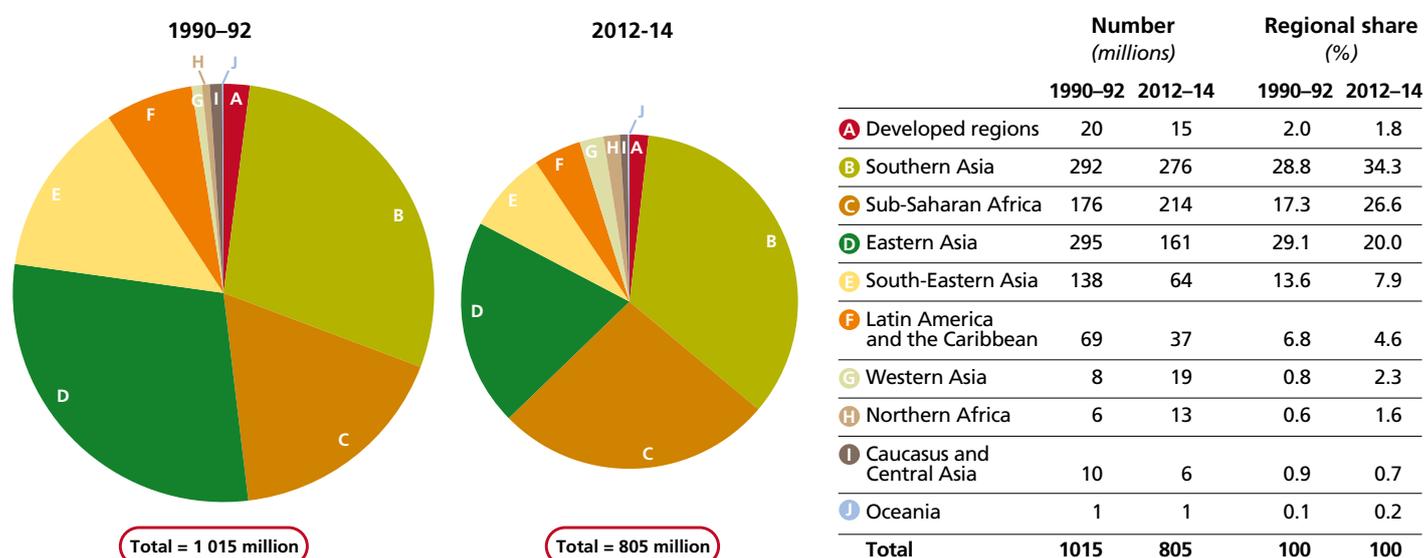
*“Political commitment of governments is increasingly being translated into comprehensive and effective action, with strengthened engagement of non-state actors. Timor-Leste recently launched its national Zero Hunger Challenge. India has recently approved its National Food Security Act scales up the country's effort to end hunger, could create one the world's biggest family farming food purchase programme and is scaling up financial inclusion for direct transfers.*

*Regional efforts are also giving important support to national action to bring the goal of achieving food security in our lifetime closer to reality. Africa and Latin America and the Caribbean are examples of this.*

*In 2003, Africa launched the landmark Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP). In 2013, the Africa Solidarity Trust Fund for Food Security was established in a demonstration that countries are willing to increase South-South Cooperation. This shows an understanding that no single country is food secure if their neighbour still suffers from hunger. This solidarity and cooperation is needed to respond to Africa's challenges, which include building resilience to extreme climatic events and ensuring peace in the region. This year, African leaders took the bold step of committing to end hunger by 2025. I am confident that in the coming years we will start seeing the concrete results of this decision,”* the FAO Director-General said.

*“The Hunger Free Latin America and the Caribbean Initiative was launched in 2005, inspired by the Brazilian Zero Hunger Programme, and was soon adopted by all countries in the region. From the very beginning, FAO supported this initiative, working with governments, parliaments and non-state actors. Over the years, the countries in Latin America and the Caribbean developed more inclusive food security strategies and strengthened social protection following the realization that increasing production alone was not enough to end hunger. These efforts help explain the success Latin America and the Caribbean is having in the fight against hunger.”*

The changing distribution of hunger in the world: numbers and shares of undernourished people by region, 1990–92 and 2012–14



Note: The areas of the pie charts are proportional to the total number of undernourished in each period. All figures are rounded.  
Source: FAO.

# Regional differences

Despite overall progress in developing countries as a whole, large differences remain across regions. In general, **Africa** is making slow progress in achieving international hunger targets, with the sub-Saharan region especially lagging behind global trends. The region has been afflicted by conflict and natural disasters, and more than one in four people remain undernourished in sub-Saharan Africa – the highest prevalence of all the regions.

The most populous region in the world, **Asia**, has reduced the number of hungry people by 217 million since 1990–92. The three countries

that have made the most progress reducing the absolute number of undernourished people are in Asia: there are 138 million fewer hungry people in China, while there are 20 million fewer hungry people in India and in Viet Nam today, as compared to 1990–92. However, Asia is still home to two-thirds of the world's hungry people: in the region as a whole, 526 million people remain undernourished. Western Asia saw the number of undernourished people increase by 10.5 million since 1990–92, from 6.3 to 8.7 percent. In Southern Asia, 276 million people were chronically undernourished in 2012–14, only marginally fewer than the number in 1990–92. Much more rapid progress has been achieved in Eastern Asia and in South-Eastern Asia. In fact, South-Eastern Asia has already met the WFS hunger target.

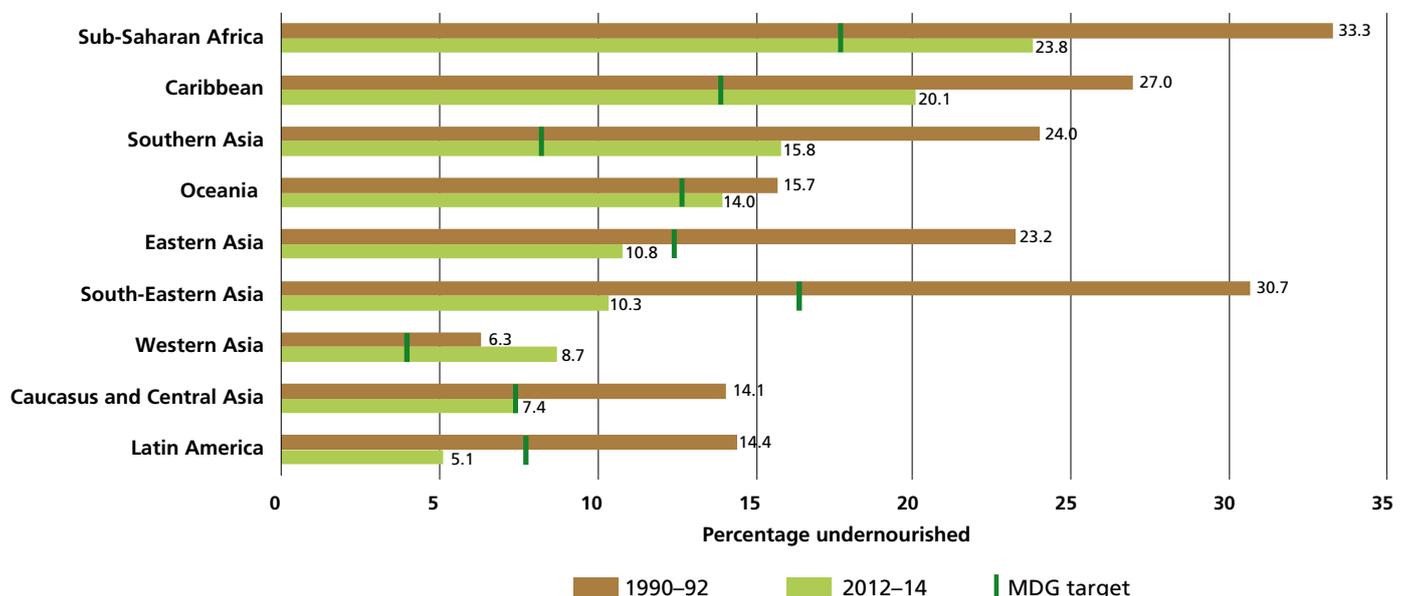
**Latin America and the Caribbean** has been one of the most successful regions in fighting hunger. As a whole, it is the only region that has already reached the MDG1c target and is almost on track to achieve the more ambitious WFS goal of halving the number of hungry people. Latin America has already reached the WFS target.

**Oceania** is currently the developing region with the lowest number of undernourished people, although the region has seen the number of hungry increase over the last two decades. Rising undernourishment in Oceania has been accompanied by a high and growing burden of overweight and obesity.



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Undernourishment trends: progress made in almost all regions, but at very different rates



# An enabling environment for food security and nutrition

A key lesson learned from examining the experiences of countries is that hunger, food insecurity and malnutrition are complex problems that cannot be resolved by a single stakeholder or sector. Addressing the immediate and underlying causes of hunger will require a variety of actions across a range of sectors, including agricultural production and productivity, rural development, forestry, fisheries, social protection and trade and markets. While many of these actions will be at national and local levels, there are also issues of a regional and global nature that require action on a larger scale. Policies and programmes are formulated and implemented in complex social, political, economic and agro-ecological environments.

Processes, either set by law or through informal arrangements, influence how people and institutions interact with each other to influence food security and nutrition outcomes. A major task of food security governance is to foster an “enabling environment” that will create incentives for all sectors to improve their impact on hunger, malnutrition and food insecurity. Five key dimensions of an enabling environment include:

**1. Policies, programmes and legal frameworks.**

Comprehensive policies, strategies and investment programmes, based on evidence and experience, addressing the underlying causes of food insecurity, food access policies and social protection schemes appropriately supported by a legal framework protecting people’s right to adequate food.

**2. Human and financial resources.**

Allocation and deployment of the necessary financial and human resources, with government capacities and capabilities.

**3. Coordination mechanisms and partnerships.**

Ensuring effective high-level inter-ministerial food security and nutrition strategy, policy and programme coordination, design and implementation.

**4. Evidence-based decision-making.**

Decision-making on food security and nutrition should draw on functional information systems that monitor trends, track actions and assess impacts in a timely and comprehensive manner, deriving lessons learned to influence the policy process.

**5. Resilience.**

Policies and approaches aimed at increasing resilience of livelihoods to natural disasters, including extreme climatic events, as well as to shocks and conflict.

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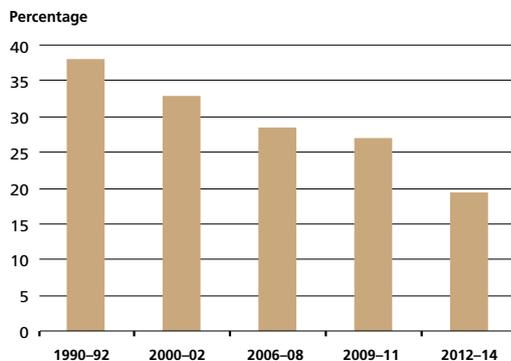


## Case studies

The countries examined by IFAD, WFP and FAO in preparing the SOFI report have had very different experiences with food security and nutrition conditioned by different levels of political stability and economic growth, as well as distinctive cultural, social and environmental conditions.

*Yet, all have addressed food insecurity by simultaneously enhancing agricultural productivity (and incomes), promoting rural development and facilitating access to adequate food for those in need.*

Prevalence of undernourishment, Plurinational State of Bolivia, 1990–92 to 2012–14

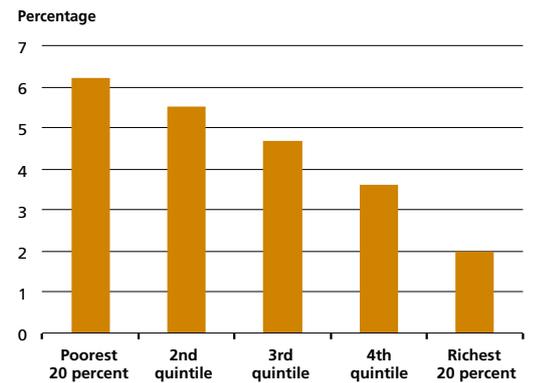


The Plurinational State of Bolivia has established processes and institutions that include all stakeholders, particularly previously marginalized indigenous peoples. The strong focus on pro-poor food security policies resulted in hunger decreasing rapidly by 7.4 percent during 2009-11 and 2012-14. Chronic undernourishment in children less than three years of age fell from 41.7 percent in 1989 to 18.5 percent in 2012.

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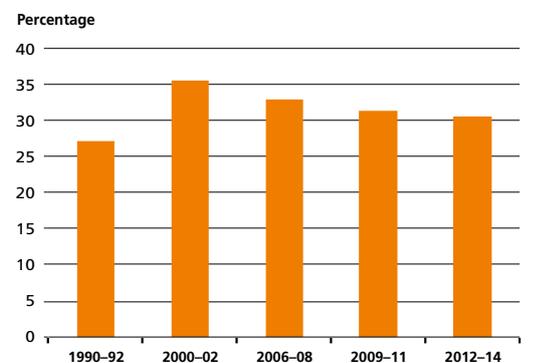
Mean annual growth in family per capita income by income quintile, Brazil, 2001–2012



Source: Government of Brazil, 2014.

Brazil has achieved both the MDG and WFS hunger targets. Progress towards these internationally established goals was accelerated in 2003 with the launch of the Zero Hunger Programme, which placed ending hunger at the centre of Brazil's political agenda and implemented a comprehensive approach to promote food security, linking productive support to social protection.

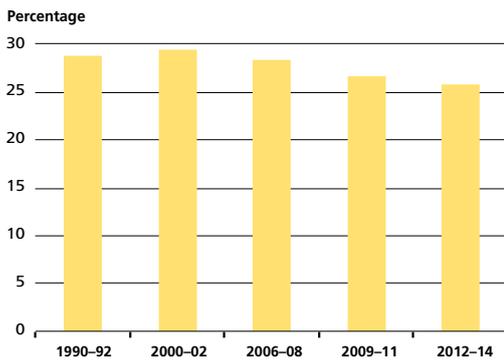
Prevalence of undernourishment, Madagascar, 1990–92 to 2012–14



Source: FAO.

In Madagascar, political crisis has hindered the development of food security institutions and the country is now rebuilding its capacities. An array of measures within the newly formulated Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries Sector Programme (PSAEP) aim to increase rural incomes by 40 percent and to reduce poverty by 50 percent by promoting agricultural productivity and sustainable utilization of natural resources. The National Action Plan for Nutrition, 2012-2015 (PNAN2), aims to reduce the prevalence of chronic malnutrition among children and also lower the proportion of the population who consume less than 2 300 kilocalories per day from 65 percent to 43 percent.

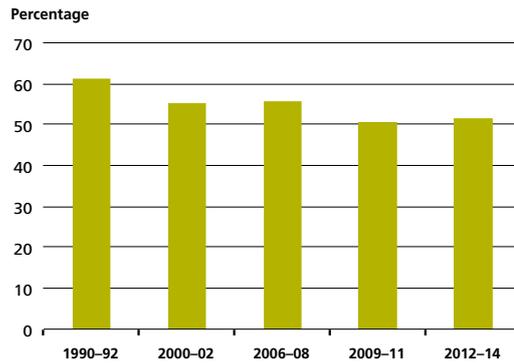
Prevalence of undernourishment, Yemen, 1990–92 to 2012–14



Source: FAO.

In **Yemen**, following the recent political unrest, the transition government has taken steps to improve food security and nutrition. The National Food Security Strategy (NFSS) aims to reduce food insecurity by one-third by 2015; make 90 percent of the population food secure by 2020; and reduce child malnutrition by at least one percentage point per year.

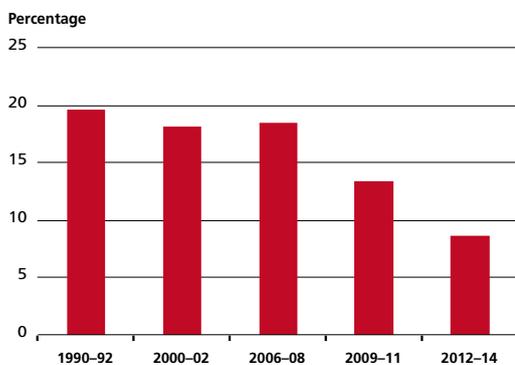
Prevalence of undernourishment, Haiti, 1990–92 to 2012–14



Source: FAO.

**Haiti**, a country in protracted crisis and frequently hit by natural disasters, has also taken steps to improve the formulation and implementation of food security policies to cope with multiple challenges. The government's twin track approach to addressing food insecurity includes a Triennial Agricultural Recovery Program as well as a program called Aba Grangou, which focuses on improving food access and utilization.

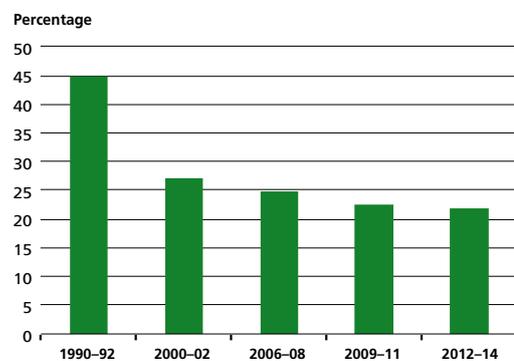
Prevalence of undernourishment, Indonesia, 1990–91 to 2012–14



Source: FAO.

**Indonesia** has made significant progress in establishing an enabling environment through efforts that include strengthening local government capacities and passing Law N°18/2012, which institutionalised food as a human right. Other key initiatives, such as fertilizer and seed subsidies for farmers and food subsidies for the poor, are important elements of the country's agricultural development and food security strategies.

Prevalence of undernourishment, Malawi, 1990–92 to 2012–14



Source: FAO.

In **Malawi**, progress in fighting hunger stands out against its modest but improving food security arrangements. Hunger and food inadequacy have been declining since 2005, marking the beginning of strong and persistent growth in maize production. Food security and nutrition remain challenges in the country, and both are key priorities of its overarching development plan: the Malawi Growth and Development Strategy 2011- 2016.

# Key lessons learned from country case studies



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Progress in food security and nutrition is achieved through the complex and changing interplay of many factors. Some of these factors are beyond the control of governments, however improving food security governance through well-designed food security laws, effective institutions and inclusive political processes can help. Key requirements for more effective government interventions include:



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**Sustained political commitment to food security**, at the highest level, including **recognizing the right to food** as a fundamental human right and supporting it through appropriate actions and legal frameworks. Strong political commitment is needed to prioritize food security and nutrition, and to provide the impetus to overcome constraints and undertake needed institutional reforms.

**Ensure continuity of food security policies even when governments change.** Legal frameworks need to be put in place to guarantee that programs that support food security and the right to food are considered a continuing duty of the State.



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**Effective participation of all key stakeholders in policy processes.** The effective inclusion of all stakeholders, especially beneficiaries, in the formulation and implementation of food security and nutrition policies gives voice to the politically weak and marginalized, resulting in more equitable policies that address the needs of the vulnerable.

**Adopting comprehensive strategies to increase food security.** A multisectoral approach is needed to offer immediate support to vulnerable families and, at the same time, tackle the different underlying causes of undernourishment. Actions should include promoting sustainable food production and consumption; building resilience so vulnerable populations can better cope with extreme climatic events; ensuring that every citizen has adequate access to food by strengthening cash transfer and other social protection programmes; and, whenever possible, building links between social protection and productive support to boost local development.



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**Improved coordination among different ministries, departments and agencies.** Effective coordination of key food security and nutrition programmes designed and implemented by the relevant ministries and agencies must be well coordinated to achieve the overall food security and nutrition objectives. This requires effective government coordination, with effective political authority, a clear mandate, role and responsibilities.



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**Putting in place legal frameworks both to empower and hold mutually accountable national governments and other partners.** It is important that all stakeholders and stakeholder groups work together responsibly in order to promote more efficient and effective action to improve food security and nutrition outcomes.

**Enhancing relevant government capacities and capabilities for designing and implementing more effective food security programmes and policies.** This includes strengthening capacities for strategic planning and policies at all levels, but also the mobilization of sufficient human and financial resources and the use of and functional information systems.

**Citation:** FAO, IFAD and WFP. 2014. *The State of Food Insecurity in the World 2014. Strengthening the enabling environment for food security and nutrition*. Rome, FAO.

This is an outline in brief of the *State of Food Insecurity in the World 2014 (SOFI 2014)* publication. The full edition of the SOFI 2014 report presents new estimates of undernourishment and updates progress towards the Millennium Development Goals and World Food Summit hunger targets.  
To see the full report go to: [www.fao.org/3/a-i4030e.pdf](http://www.fao.org/3/a-i4030e.pdf)

