



United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization

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Committee History

The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) was established in 1945 to stop hunger and provide proper nutrition to all people. Headquartered in Rome, Italy, the FAO is a specialized agency of the UN. This means that it acts somewhat independently, but it works with the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) to coordinate its work with the UN. The FAO has a large membership, including nearly every UN Member State. As of December 2015, the FAO employed more than 3,000 staff members. Sometimes, the mandate of the World Food Programme (WFP) is confused with the mandate of the FAO. In fact, the WFP was originally created as project of the FAO before becoming a separate organization. In the simplest terms, the WFP tends to provide food directly to people in need, while the FAO is focused on helping countries develop strong policies to support stable, sustainable agriculture.

The FAO has overseen many of the UN's great successes. These include the eradication of rinderpest (a deadly virus that killed off many cows and buffalo), bringing stability to global food prices, and the Codex Alimentarius, which is a list of international food standards to protect consumers. Today, the FAO continues to play an important role in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Six of the sixteen SDGs, including SDG 2: Zero Hunger and SDG 14: Life Below Water, have indicators managed directly by the FAO.

Food Security for All

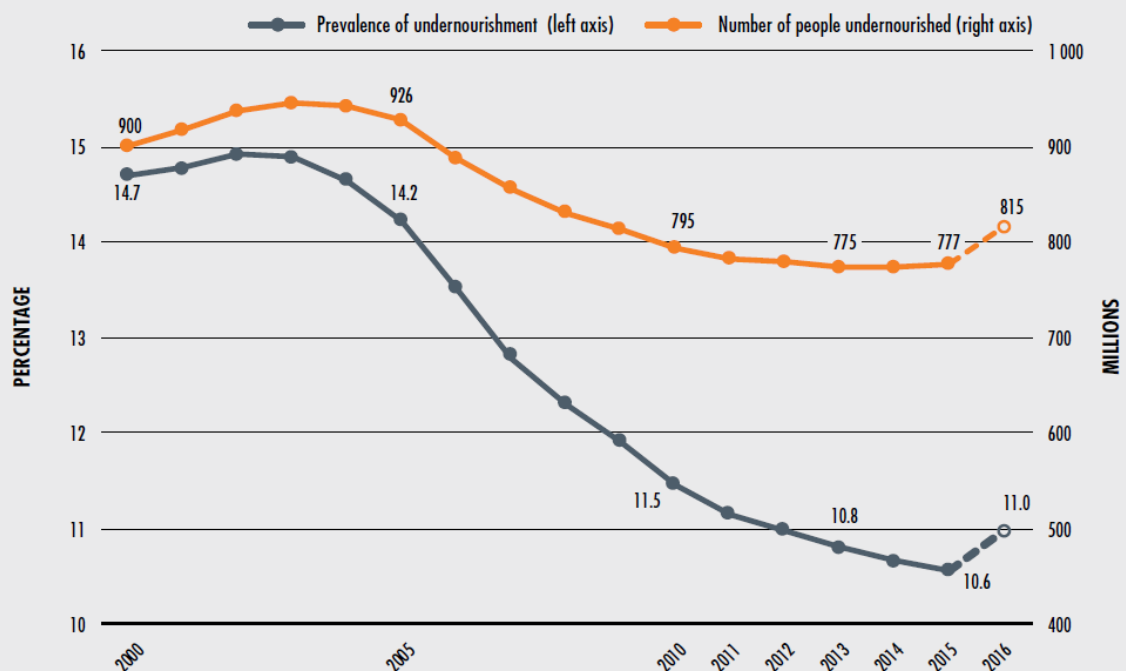
History

Before the Sustainable Development Goals were developed, the world adopted the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). These were eight goals that the global community agreed to pursue from 2000-2015. Among these goals, the reduction in hunger around the world was one of the greatest successes of the MDGs. The percentage of people suffering from hunger was nearly halved between 1990 and 2015, and the percentage of people who were undernourished (not able to consume enough food to meet their daily energy needs) dropped from 14.7% to 10.6% in 2015. What these statistics do not show, however, are the major barriers that were overcome to achieve them, such as a rapid increase in global food prices in 2008-2009 that threatened to undo this progress. However, the global community persevered through these challenges and was able to achieve the goals.

The SDGs were created to continue the successes of the MDGs. Target 2.1 of the SDGs reads "By 2030, end hunger and ensure access by all people, in particular the poor and people in vulnerable situations, including infants, to safe, nutritious and sufficient food all year round." However, the percentage of people who are undernourished has started to rise again for the first time in over a decade. This growth of hunger

is observed around the world, but it is most prevalent in Sub-Saharan Africa, where 22.7% of people were chronically undernourished in 2016.

Food security experts have identified two main causes of the global increase in undernourishment. First, the growth of conflicts around the world and the record number of refugees requiring aid have brought food insecurity to places where hunger was once rare. Conflicts like the ongoing civil war in South Sudan, violence in Yemen, and long-term crises such as in Somalia are some of the leading contributors to global hunger. Climate change (also known as “global warming”) is also believed to be a factor, as major floods and droughts have become more common throughout the world. Many other factors may affect local communities, such as rising unemployment, food costs, and shrinking government support programs. Children are the most vulnerable to the effects of hunger, and even a short period of undernourishment can lead to a lifetime of health effects. When children under 5 years of age are undernourished, the most obvious effect is that they become stunted, or they do not grow tall enough for their age group. Another phenomenon, called wasting, is when children have too little body weight for their height. Children may also suffer from both of these problems. Globally, 155 million children were estimated to be stunted and 52 million suffered from wasting in 2016. Beyond these physical effects, undernourished children suffer many other health effects, such as slower cognitive development.



NOTE: Prevalence and number of undernourished people in the world, 2000–2016.
 Figures for 2016 are projected estimates (see Box 1 on p. 4 and Methodological notes in Annex 1, p. 95).
 SOURCE: FAO.

Recent Developments

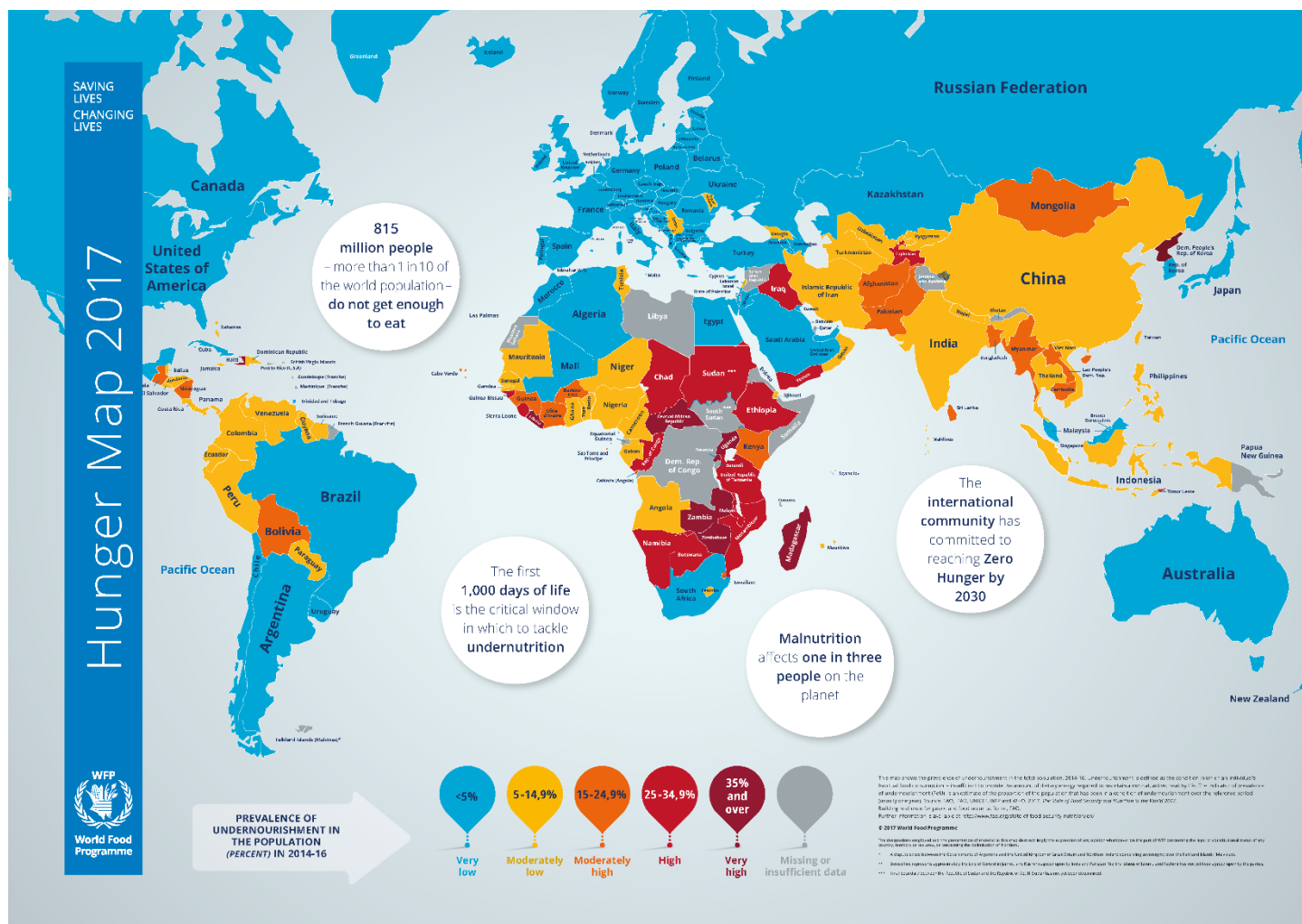
Making the price of food stable globally is a major priority of the FAO. In 2016, 26 countries around the world experienced high food price volatility, and in 21 of those countries, the prices of the most basic cereals (maize, wheat, rice, sorghum/millet) changed easily. These price changes affect the world’s poorest more than anyone else because they often rely on these cheap foods for nutrition.

Current trends show the growing food crisis becoming worse over the next few years. The FAO Food Price Index, which tracks the growth or decline in the prices of common agricultural products, has increased every month in 2018 except one (as of August 2018). Poor weather has caused a decline in the amount of food grown in many categories, which carries the risk of creating unstable food prices.

Growing trade wars between countries also threaten the stability of global food prices. The growing trade conflict between the United States and China, Canada, and the European Union has led to many countries

applying tariffs (taxes on imports/exports) to US exports. Unfortunately, common US exports that are targeted include agricultural products like soybeans, maize, and pork. Even if people don't consume these products, the tariffs have been causing a steady increase in the price of all agricultural products, harming the food stability of the world's poor.

Investment in agriculture by governments is one of the best ways to ensure a stable supply of food. However, countries have invested a relatively smaller amount of money over the past decades. Furthermore, foreign aid to agriculture in developing countries has also declined. Without these investments, it is harder for farmers to invest in the equipment they need to increase how much food they produce and create the necessary protections from disasters like floods.



Treaties & Agreements

In 2014, representatives of more than 170 governments convened in Rome at the Second International Conference on Nutrition (ICN2). One of the outcome documents of ICN2 was the Rome Declaration on Nutrition, which was also later endorsed by the UN General Assembly in Resolution 70/259. The Declaration touched on a wide variety of topics. It reaffirmed previous commitments to eliminating hunger around the world, such as those made at the World Summit on Food Security (2009) and the World Food Summits (1996 and 2002). It went on to acknowledge the various drivers that can help or hurt food security such as trade, climate change, conflicts, and income, among others. Alongside the Rome Declaration on Nutrition, ICN2's second outcome document was the Framework for Action, which made a series of policy recommendations for countries to adopt to help achieve food security.

In Resolution 70/259, the UN General Assembly also declared 2016-2025 to be the Decade of Action on Nutrition, drawing global attention to the increase in undernourishment around the world. Additionally,

the General Assembly also asked for biannual reports prepared by the FAO and World Health Organization (WHO) regarding the progress towards the Rome Declaration on Nutrition and the Framework for Action.

Guiding Questions

- What is the undernourishment rate in your country? How does that compare with the undernourishment rate in the region(s) surrounding your country?
- Which causes of undernourishment (e.g. conflict, climate change, economic depression, etc.) are most likely to affect your country in the future?
- Where does your country's food supply come from (for example, does your country grow its own food, or rely on neighboring countries)? What might interrupt that food supply, and how can those risks be prevented?
- Is your country an exporter of food? If so, what products does it export and to where? Have there been any changes in how much of each product your country produces?
- What aid does your government provide to farmers in your country?
- What foreign aid does your government provide to other countries? How much of this foreign aid goes to agriculture?
- Has your country participated in any recent trade agreements or trade wars? Have any of the affected goods been agricultural?

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