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AFRICA
REGIONAL
OVERVIEW OF
FOOD SECURITY
AND NUTRITION

**ADDRESSING THE THREAT FROM
CLIMATE VARIABILITY AND EXTREMES
FOR FOOD SECURITY AND NUTRITION**

ADDRESSING THE THREAT FROM CLIMATE VARIABILITY AND EXTREMES FOR FOOD SECURITY AND NUTRITION

Last year's edition of the *Africa Regional Overview of Food Security and Nutrition* reported that the food security situation on the continent appeared to be worsening. The latest available data presented in the 2018 report confirms this trend. The worsening situation in Africa is due to difficult global economic conditions and, in many countries, conflict and climate-related disasters, sometimes in combination. Economic growth slowed in 2016 due to weak commodity prices, in particular for oil and minerals. Food insecurity has worsened in countries affected by conflict, often exacerbated by drought or floods, and in Southern and Eastern Africa many countries have been adversely affected by prolonged drought. Notably, several countries have achieved sustained progress in reducing food insecurity in the face of challenging circumstances.

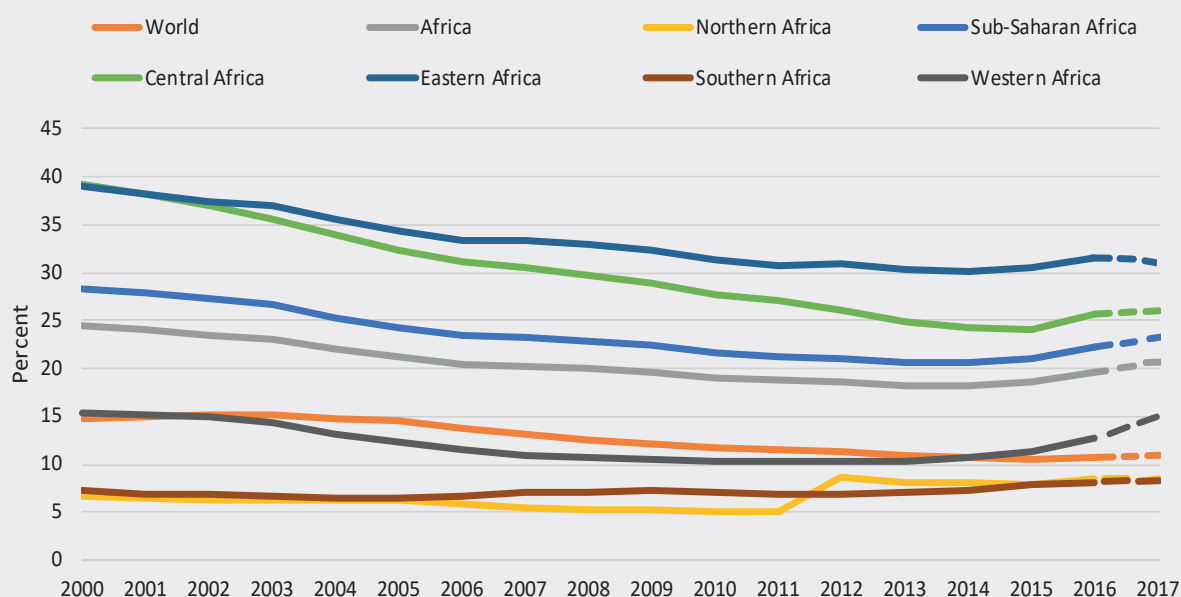
Globally, the prevalence of undernourishment has risen slightly each year, from 10.6 in 2015 to 10.9 percent in 2017. Today there are 821 million undernourished people in the world. For Africa, 20.4 percent of the continent's population – 257 million people – are undernourished, up

from 19.7 in 2016 – 241 million people. In sub-Saharan Africa, there are 237 million undernourished in 2017, up from 222 million in 2016.

The deterioration of the food security situation and the lack of progress towards the WHO global nutrition targets makes it imperative for countries to step up their efforts, if they are to achieve a world without hunger and malnutrition by 2030. The call for greater action remains true even as the economic and climatic situation improves, offering hope of renewed progress in reducing food insecurity and malnutrition on the continent.

The need for greater efforts also emerges clearly from the findings of the inaugural biennial review of progress in implementing the goals of the Malabo Declaration. The evidence presented in the review indicates that countries committed to the values and principles of the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP), and that implement their National Agricultural Investment Plans, perform better. It is therefore imperative to strengthen commitments to the CAADP goals and to accelerate efforts toward formulating and implementing National and Regional Agricultural Investment Plans.

PREVALENCE OF UNDERNOURISHMENT IN THE WORLD, AFRICA AND ITS SUBREGIONS, 2005–2017



*Projected values, illustrated by dashed lines.

Source: FAO.

This year's *Regional Overview* also presents evidence from a number of countries that have successfully reduced food insecurity and malnutrition. Their experience shows that policies, when appropriately designed, and effectively coordinated and implemented, are important drivers of progress towards Sustainable Development Goal 2, i.e. end all forms of hunger and malnutrition by 2030. In addition to specific food security and nutrition policies, this year's report reviews four important cross-cutting topics, namely, youth employment, remittances, intraregional trade, and climate change. It highlights their interplay with the food system and their role in food security and nutrition.

The 2017 *Africa Regional Overview of Food Security and Nutrition* reported that in many countries climate variability and extremes, not necessarily attributable to climate change, were among the reasons for rising levels of hunger. This year's edition presents a broader evidence-based assessment of the threat posed by more frequent occurrences of climate extremes and rising climate variability to food security and nutrition in the region. Many countries in Africa are at great risk from such climate-related disasters and suffer from them frequently. The extremely strong 2015–16 El Niño caused record-breaking warming and widespread drought that left millions food insecure in sub-Saharan Africa. Over the last ten years, climate extremes affected an average of 16 million people and caused USD 0.67 billion in damage in Africa, each year. Between 1970 and 2008 over 95 percent of deaths from natural disasters happened in developing countries. More numerous and more frequent occurrences of climate extremes and a rise in climate variability are

threatening to erode gains made towards ending hunger and malnutrition.

In sub-Saharan Africa's semiarid and subhumid areas, droughts and floods are the main causes of short-term fluctuations in food production. If such extreme events become more frequent and severe, they will threaten the stability of food supplies and thus food security. The available evidence shows that extreme climate events will adversely affect food security and nutrition through a number of channels, ultimately impacting all four dimensions of food security.

Climate change in combination with poor development planning, poverty and environmental degradation increases the risk of a climate event becoming a disaster. A collective approach that combines climate change adaptation with disaster resilient development is an opportunity to address climate and disaster risks within the context of broader development goals. Greater urgency in building resilience of households, communities and countries is needed. A myriad of challenges must be faced to building institutional capacity in designing, coordinating and scaling up actions for risk monitoring and early warning systems, emergency preparedness and response, vulnerability reduction measures, shock-responsive social protection, and planning and implementing resilience building measures. Policy-makers must work towards scaling up actions to strengthen the resilience of people's livelihoods, food systems and nutrition to climate variability and extremes through context specific integrated disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation policies, programmes and practices that are also nutrition-sensitive.

KEY MESSAGES

➔ Africa is not on track to meet SDG 2. The prevalence of undernourishment continues to rise and now affects 20 percent of the population on the continent, more than in any other region. In Northern Africa, the rise is much less pronounced and the prevalence is 8.5 percent. In sub-Saharan Africa, the upward trend appears to be accelerating, and now 23 percent of the population is undernourished. The rise in the prevalence of undernourishment has been highest in Western Africa, followed by Central Africa.

➔ There are today 821 million undernourished people in the world, 36.4 million more than in 2015. Of these 257 million are in Africa, of whom 237 million in sub-Saharan Africa and 20 million in

Northern Africa. Compared to 2015 there are 34.5 million more undernourished in Africa, 32.6 million more in sub-Saharan Africa, and 1.9 million more in Northern Africa. Nearly half of the increase is due to the rise in undernourished people in Western Africa, while another third is from Eastern Africa.

➔ At the regional level, the prevalence of stunting in children under five is falling, but only few countries are on track to meet the global nutrition target for stunting. Overweight in children under five continues to rise and is particularly high in Northern and Southern Africa. Progress towards meeting the WHO global nutrition targets is too slow at continental level to meet any of the targets.

➔ The worsening food security situation was driven by difficult global economic conditions and weak commodity prices, in particular for oil and minerals. In many countries, notably in Eastern and Southern Africa, adverse climatic conditions due to El Niño led to a decline in agricultural production and soaring staple food prices. The economic and climatic situation has improved in 2017, but some countries continue to be affected by drought or poor rainfall. In several countries, conflict, often in combination with adverse weather, has left millions of people in need of urgent assistance.

➔ Youth employment is a fundamental challenge across the continent. Most youth work in the informal economy and 67 percent of young workers live in poverty. Agriculture and the rural economy will play a key role in creating jobs to absorb the millions of youth joining the labour market each year. Action to provide infrastructure, facilitating private enterprise development and youth specific skills training and access to land, financing, inputs, services and safety nets are essential.

➔ Remittances from migrants play an important role in reducing poverty and hunger as well as stimulating productive investments. International remittances make up 3 percent of GDP in Africa and governments should strengthen their role in national development through reducing transfer costs and engaging the African Diaspora. At the same time governments must promote decent employment, inclusive growth and strengthened household resilience supported by strong, integrated social protection systems to avoid involuntary migration.

➔ The signing of the African Continental Free Trade Area agreement is an opportunity to accelerate growth and sustainable development by increasing trade, including trade in agricultural products. Although agricultural intra-African exports rose from USD2 billion in 2000 to USD13.7 billion in 2013, they remain relatively modest and often informal. Much remains to be done to facilitate trade and reduce non-tariff barriers. Opening trade of food also carries risks to consumer and producer welfare, and governments should avoid using trade policy for multiple objectives but rather combine trade reform with additional instruments, such as safety nets and risk-mitigating programmes, to achieve food security and nutrition goals.

➔ Climate change is a present and growing threat to food security and nutrition in Africa and is a particularly severe threat to countries relying heavily on agriculture. In general, reduced precipitation and higher temperatures are already impacting negatively on the yields of staple food crops, although there is some spatial diversity. By 2050, climate change will cause another 71 million people to be food insecure in the world, over half of whom will be in sub-Saharan Africa.

➔ Climate variability and extremes are a key driver of the recent rise in food insecurity and one of the leading causes of the severe food crises that have affected the continent. They undermine, directly and indirectly, food availability, access, utilization and stability with grave consequences for immediate and long-term nutrition outcomes, especially for children.

➔ Climate resilience is key and must be built around climate risk assessments, science, proven technologies, and cross-sectoral collaboration. Greater action is required to strengthen or build institutional capacity for risk monitoring and early warning systems; emergency preparedness and response; vulnerability reduction measures; shock-responsive and long-term social protection; and planning and implementing resilience building measures.

➔ The impacts of climate variability and extremes vary by gender and are often worse for women. Climate adaptation, mitigation, and resilience-building must, therefore, take a gender sensitive approach.

➔ Africa lags in developing climate adaptation strategies and implementation. Greater efforts are needed in data collection, monitoring, and implementation of climate-smart agriculture practices. Continued efforts, through partnerships, blending climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction, and long-term financing, are needed to bridge humanitarian and development approaches. In addition, actions across sectors must be scaled up to achieve greater resilience to climate variability and extremes.



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