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The State of Food Insecurity in the World 2010

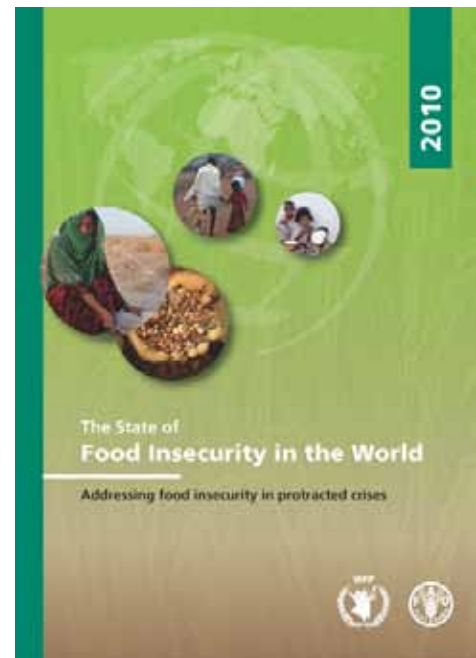
Addressing food insecurity in protracted crises

The number of undernourished people in the world remains unacceptably high at close to one billion in 2010 despite an expected decline – the first in 15 years. This decline is largely attributable to a more favourable economic environment in 2010 – particularly in developing countries – and the fall in both international and domestic food prices since 2008.

FAO estimates that a total of 925 million people are undernourished in 2010 compared with 1.023 billion in 2009. Most of the decrease was in Asia, with 80 million fewer hungry, but progress was also made in sub-Saharan Africa, where 12 million fewer people are going hungry. However, the number of hungry people is higher in 2010 than before the food and economic crises of 2008–09.

KEY MESSAGES

- **The number and the proportion of undernourished people have declined, but they remain unacceptably high.** Undernourishment remains higher than before the food and economic crises, making it ever more difficult to achieve international hunger targets.
- **Countries in protracted crisis require special attention.** They are characterized by long-lasting or recurring crises and limited capacity to respond, exacerbating food insecurity problems.
- **Improving food security in protracted crises requires going beyond short-term responses in order to protect and promote people's livelihoods over the longer term.** Appropriate responses must also recognize the different impacts of protracted crises on men and women.
- **Supporting institutions is key to addressing protracted crises.** Local institutions, in particular, can help address food security problems in protracted crises, but they are often ignored by external actors.
- **Agriculture and the rural economy are key sectors for supporting livelihoods in protracted crises, but they are not properly reflected in aid flows.** While agriculture accounts for a third of national income in countries in protracted crisis, the sector receives only 4 percent of humanitarian aid and 3 percent of development aid.
- **The current aid architecture needs to be modified to better address both immediate needs and the structural causes of protracted crises.** Important areas of intervention (including social protection and risk reduction) are often underfunded.
- **Food assistance helps build the basis for long-term food security, and is particularly important in countries in protracted crisis.** The use of a varied set of food assistance tools, complemented by innovations in how food is procured, will serve as a strong basis for food security in the longer term.
- **Broader social protection measures help countries cope with protracted crises and lay the foundation for long-term recovery.** Key interventions include providing safety nets, insurance when appropriate, and services such as health and education.



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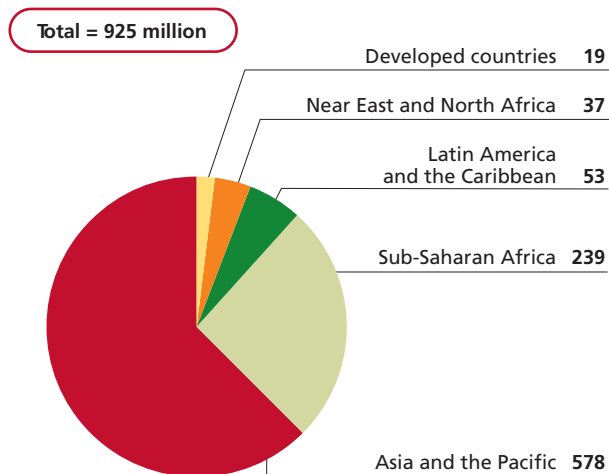
The State of Food Insecurity in the World raises awareness about global hunger issues, discusses underlying causes of hunger and malnutrition and monitors progress towards hunger reduction targets established at the 1996 World Food Summit and the Millennium Summit. The publication is targeted at a wide audience, including policy-makers, international organizations, academic institutions and the general public with a general interest in linkages between food security, human and economic development.



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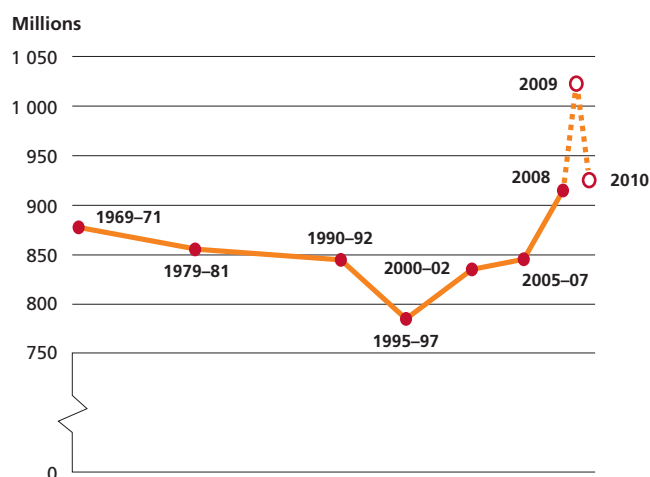


Undernourishment in 2010, by region (millions)



Source: FAO.

Number of undernourished people in the world, 1969-71 to 2010



Note: Figures for 2009 and 2010 are estimated by FAO with input from the United States Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service. Full details of the methodology are provided in the technical background notes (available at www.fao.org/publication/sofi/en).

Source: FAO.

Hunger is particularly high and persistent in countries in protracted crisis. These countries are characterized by recurrent natural disasters or conflict and an insufficient institutional capacity to respond to the crises. In the 22 countries currently considered to be in protracted crisis, more than 166 million people are undernourished, representing nearly 20 percent of all undernourished people in the world.

Protracted crises call for specially designed and targeted assistance. This assistance should focus on the immediate need to save lives, but also address the underlying drivers of food insecurity. These may include conflict, disintegration of institutions, depletion of resources, loss of livelihoods and displacement of populations. Building longer-term assistance on existing or revitalized local institutions is a promising strategy, which currently receives insufficient attention by the development community.

Trends in development assistance give cause for concern. Nearly two-thirds of countries in protracted crisis receive less development assistance per person than the average for least-developed countries. More importantly, the agriculture sector in these countries is often underfunded, despite accounting for one-third of national income and supporting the livelihoods of nearly two-thirds of their populations. Increased investments in agriculture should aim to achieve sustained, long-term improvements in the

productive capacity of vulnerable countries and at the same time strengthen their resilience to shocks.

A new aid architecture is needed to bridge the gap between (short term) relief measures and (longer term) development approaches. Social protection mechanisms, such as school meals, cash and food-for-work activities and vouchers can make a vital difference in this regard. These mechanisms can be supported through food assistance, for example by providing food as part of safety net programmes and stimulating markets through purchase of food aid supplies on local markets or through cash-based schemes.

Three main sets of recommendations emerge for addressing food insecurity in protracted crisis. Improved analysis and understanding of countries' needs will be instrumental in providing more effective and lasting help. Furthermore, governments, donors and agencies should support the protection, promotion and rebuilding of livelihoods, and the institutions behind them. Finally, external assistance in protracted crises needs to be revisited to address the challenges on the ground. The organization of a High-Level Forum to craft the principles governing assistance in protracted crises, involving all relevant actors, could be an important first step towards a new "Agenda for Action" for countries in protracted crisis.