

## The European year for development: Food security

Food security is a multi-layered concept, covering availability, access, use and stability. It is recognised as a global public good.

To be free from hunger and malnutrition is also a human right.

Following the 2007/2008 food crisis, the international community committed to investing more in agriculture and to better governance.

The MDG target to halve the proportion of hungry people was nearly achieved, but 795 million people remain undernourished.

Food security exists when all people, at all times, have physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life. This requires multidimensional policies, including developing sustainable agriculture, food processing and trade; providing financial help for vulnerable groups; and working to combat malnutrition. Addressing food insecurity has always been essential in international development and humanitarian aid. Given the interdependence of agricultural markets and international value chains, food security is also increasingly recognised as a global public good, requiring collective action and international governance.

To be free from hunger and malnutrition is also a human right, spelled out in international human rights instruments. Various conferences and summits – including the World Food Conference in 1974 and the 1996 FAO World Food Summit – targeted this problem and set ambitious goals. The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) of 2000 aimed to halve the proportion of hungry in the world by 2015. Yet in funding terms, food security was not a priority: official development aid (ODA) invested in agriculture decreased from 19 % of total ODA in 1980 to a low of 3.8 % in 2006.

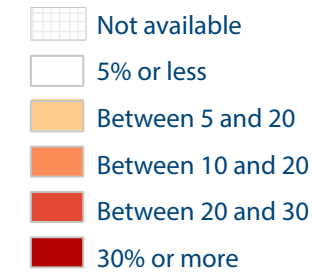
This changed following the food crisis of 2007/8, when a sharp increase in staple food prices pushed an estimated 130-155 million people into poverty. The international community took real initiatives to boost investment and develop regional and global governance structures for food security. At the [FAO Summit on World Food Security](#) in 2009, countries and international organisations committed to reversing the decline in domestic and international funding for food security in developing countries. Significant new actors became involved – the G8, starting with the 2009 [L'Aquila Joint Statement on Global Food Security](#), and the G20, with various initiatives, including the 2011 [Action Plan on Food Price Volatility and Agriculture](#). To institute a more coherent and effective system of governance, the [Committee on World Food Security](#) (CFS) was reformed in 2009 into a platform bringing together all stakeholders, including from civil society and the private sector. The 2015 EXPO in Milan, themed 'Feeding the Planet - Energy for Life', has underscored that food security remains a global challenge.

According to the [MDG report of 2015](#), the global percentage of undernourished people dropped between 1990 and 2014-2016, from 23.3 % to an estimated 12.9 % – meaning that the MDG hunger target was almost reached. But one in nine individuals (795 million people) still suffers from hunger, with the vast majority – 780 million – living in developing countries. Progress has been particularly slow in sub-Saharan Africa, the Caribbean, southern Asia and Oceania. Another MDG target – to halve the proportion of underweight children under 5 years – was nearly reached, but some 90 million children remain undernourished, running a greater risk of infection and impaired cognitive abilities affecting their future.

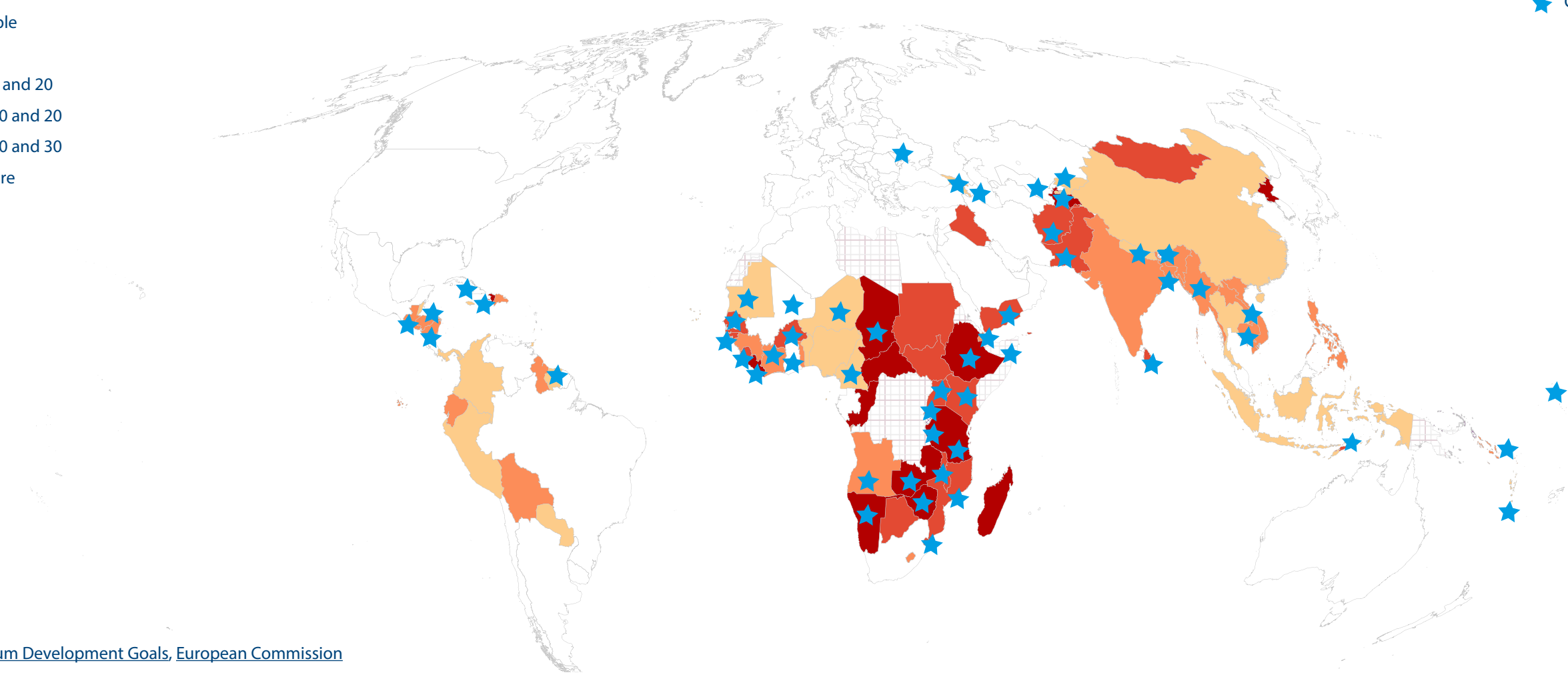
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PEOPLE SUFFERING FROM HUNGER IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES IN 2015

% of total population



★ Countries likely to have food security as a focal sector

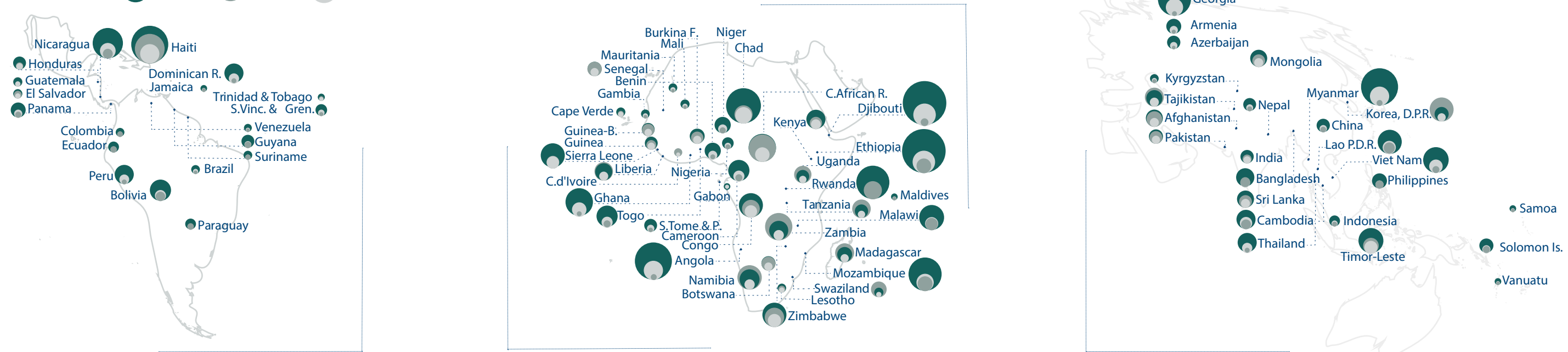


- Suriname, Haiti, Cuba, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua.
- Mauritania, Burkina Faso, Senegal, Gambia, Guinea Bissau, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Sao Tome and Principe, Benin, Mali, Niger, Chad, Cameroon, Angola, Rwanda, Namibia, Swaziland, Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Malawi, Zambia, Burundi, Kenya, Uganda, Ethiopia, Somalia and Yemen.
- Fiji, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, Timor Leste, Laos Democratic Republic, Cambodia, Myanmar, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Bhutan, Nepal, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Azerbaijan, Georgia and Moldova.

Source: [UN Millenium Development Goals](#), [European Commission](#)

DEVELOPING COUNTRIES' PROGRESS TOWARDS THE MDG TARGET OF HALVING THE PROPORTION OF HUNGRY PEOPLE BETWEEN 1990 AND 2015

% of total population



The Sustainable Development Goals include an ambitious zero hunger target and address the structural causes of food insecurity.

Helping small farmers to enhance sustainable production is one important way to address food insecurity in developing countries.

The EU has made food and nutrition security a focal area of development cooperation.

The EU and its Member States committed to reducing the number of stunted children by 7 million before 2025.

Parliament has supported a human rights-based approach to addressing food security and has expressed strong concerns over land grabbing.

The new [Sustainable Development Agenda](#) adopted at the UN Summit on 25-27 September 2015 sets more ambitious targets: to fully eradicate hunger and to end all forms of malnutrition by 2030. Additional targets address the structural causes of food insecurity and respond to new challenges. Although better distributing food and reducing waste offer real potential, demographic trends, growth and the growing consumption of meat and dairy mean that agricultural production must increase by 60 % by 2050 to meet the projected demands of over 9 billion people.

One of the major obstacles to enhancing food supplies in developing countries is the lack of capacities of smallholder farmers, who form the backbone of agriculture. Farmers are often insufficiently integrated into the formal economy due to limited access to infrastructure, information, capital, skills and technologies. Food farmers also increasingly compete for resources such as land, energy and water with emerging industries and biofuel production. At the same time, climate change and unsustainable production methods reduce land availability and productivity. Large-scale land acquisitions by foreign investors and 'land-grabbing' are also significant concerns, as small farmers are often displaced or downgraded to wage-labourers. Production is then often aimed for export, rather than local consumption. Designing trade rules to support agricultural development and food security is a major challenge and has been one of the most contentious issues in the ongoing Doha Development Round of negotiations at the World Trade Organisation (WTO).

According to the first [biennial report on implementing EU commitments in the field of food security](#) of 2014, the EU and its Member States invested almost EUR 3.4 billion of development assistance in 2012, as well as EUR 1.1 billion of humanitarian aid in food and nutrition security (10 % of all ODA). Around 60 % of the funding supported smallholder resilience and rural livelihoods, with 12 % earmarked for effective governance and 14 % for enhanced nutrition. Investments are likely to increase in the future: with the [2011 Agenda for Change](#), the EU defined food security as a strategic priority for EU development policy, and many developing countries chose food security as a focal sector in bilateral cooperation programmes for 2014-2020. Since 2010, a comprehensive policy framework has been adopted to promote [food security](#) and combat [malnutrition](#), complemented by a [strategy for promoting resilience](#) in crisis-prone regions and an [action plan](#) to reduce the number of stunted children by 7 million by 2025.

The European Parliament – always stressing food as a human right – [welcomed](#) the EU's new focus on agriculture and food security in development cooperation and the commitments to combat malnutrition. In its resolutions, including one [on the Milan EXPO](#), the EP has called consistently to concentrate on small- and medium-scale farming, to promote sustainable and agro-ecological practices and to integrate issues of gender. Protecting land rights and preventing 'land-grabbing' have been major concerns for Parliament, along with enhanced [policy coherence](#) and systematically evaluating the impact of EU agricultural, trade and energy policies – such as the biofuel policy – on food security in the developing world. The EP also monitors the trend of enhancing public-private partnerships in agriculture, as promoted by the [New Alliance for Food Security and Nutrition in Africa](#). This Alliance will be the subject of an 'own-initiative' report by the EP's Development Committee.

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