Sub-Saharan Africa

The number of hungry people in Sub-Saharan Africa is projected to rise during the next decade, although at a slower rate than population growth. Therefore, the share of hungry people in the total population will actually decline over time. Per capita consumption is projected to hold steady through 2011 as growth in grain production—the staple of the diet in the region—is estimated to barely exceed population growth. [Stacey Rosen]

The goal of the 1996 World Food Summit is to reduce the number of hungry people by half the 1996 level by 2015. The number of hungry people—those consuming less than the nutritional requirement of 2,100 calories per day—in Sub-Saharan Africa is estimated at 337 million in 2001. This is equal to 57 percent of the population of the region. This number represents an increase of 19 percent from the mid-1990 level—clearly a move in the opposite direction of the food summit goal. Over the next decade, the absolute number of hungry people is projected to continue on this upward trend, reaching a projected 367 million people in 2011. This increase, however, is smaller than the growth in population, so the share of hungry people in the total population will decline over time. While food supplied by domestic production and imports is sufficient to keep pace with population growth at current consumption levels, it falls short of meeting nutritional standards.

Food insecurity is more severe in Sub-Saharan Africa than in other regions covered in the report. In 2001, Sub-Saharan Africa accounted for 23 percent of the population of the 67 countries included in this report. However, the region's share of hungry people across the 67 countries is significantly higher—38 percent. The situation worsens over the next decade as this share is projected to jump to almost 50 percent by 2011. However, the increase is more reflective of the tremendous strides made in India rather than a strong deterioration in the region.

Sub-Saharan Africa is characterized by natural disasters (droughts and floods) and political strife. These factors preclude food security in the region, especially in the near term. ERS' estimates of 2001 per capita consumption indicate a slight drop relative to the 2000 estimates as commercial imports are estimated to decline. As a result, the food needed to meet the nutritional target is estimated at nearly 13 million tons, 17 percent higher than the 2000 estimate.

Between 1990 and 2000, per capita consumption in the region grew just less than 1 percent per year. If Nigeria were excluded from the equation, per capita consumption would be stagnant. Nigeria is by far the largest country in the region and its performance skews the results for the region as a whole. The region's population growth is projected to slow over the next decade, largely due to the effects of HIV/AIDS, to an average 2.4 percent per year—as compared with the historical rate of 2.8 percent. Growth in production of grains, the most important component of the region's diet, is estimated to just barely exceed that of population growth. Commercial imports are projected to grow 1.3 percent per year, slower than all the other regions in this report (except North Africa), as export earnings performance is expected to be weak. As a result, the region's import share of food supplies is projected to average less than 9 percent during the next decade—placing pressure on domestic production to perform well. Only Asia is projected to have a lower share. In comparison, imports by Latin America and North Africa will account for about 45 percent of supplies. In the NIS region, the share is over 20 percent. As a result of these production and import trends, per capita consumption for the region is projected to virtually hold steady through 2011.

Per capita consumption is projected to rise in 16 of the 37 countries in the region over the next 10 years. The rates of increase range from nearly zero in Togo to more than 2 percent per year in Zimbabwe. The growth in Zimbabwe is not expected to come from outstanding performance in yields or high growth in export earnings that would support a surge in commercial imports. To the contrary, this growth will come from the prevalence of HIV/AIDS, which is expected to significantly reduce the country's population growth rate—from 2.6 percent per year in the historical period to a projected rate of about 1 percent. Therefore, the projected production growth of less than 3 percent per year will be sufficient to raise per capita consumption

Table 3—Food availability and food gaps for Sub-Saharan Africa

Year	Grain production	Root production	Commercial imports	Food aid receipts (grains)	Aggregate availability of all food
			---1,000 tons ---		
1992	57,345	37,090	7,747	4,932	121,387
1993	61,108	39,687	9,086	2,584	128,059
1994	64,401	40,074	8,991	3,160	133,155
1995	64,872	41,274	7,549	2,531	135,417
1996	69,804	41,424	7,606	2,073	139,203
1997	63,630	42,976	10,383	1,788	139,364
1998	69,592	45,272	12,425	2,546	148,260
1999	67,876	46,550	11,056	2,169	149,019
2000	66,821	46,506	12,683	2,855	152,452
Projections				Food gap SQ / NR	(w/o food aid)
2001	67,647	48,413	12,404	*6,227* / *12,914*	146,910
2006	84,524	53,086	12,918	*4,120* / *9,545*	172,933
2011	96,701	58,144	13,755	*6,870* / *11,332*	193,730

Sub-Saharan Africa
589 million people in 2001

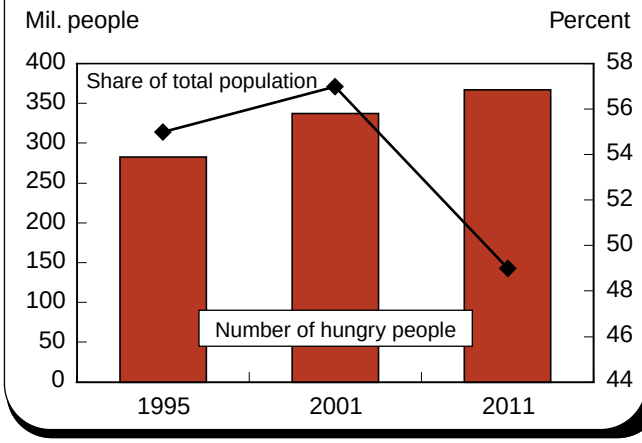
Growth in grain production will match that of population.

Imports will continue to play a minor role in total food supplies.

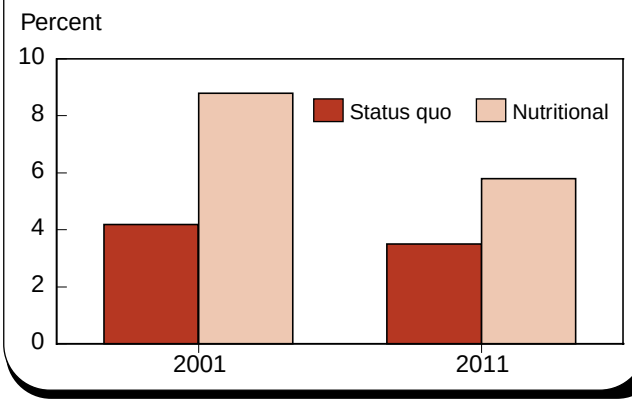
At the regional level, per capita consumption is projected to hold steady through the next decade; however, it will decline in 21 of the 37 countries.

The number of hungry people in the region is projected to rise from 337 million in 2001 to 367 million in 2011; roughly half the population is projected to be hungry in 2011.

Hunger in Sub-Saharan Africa



Food gaps as a share of food availability in Sub-Saharan Africa



Sub-Saharan Africa: Calorie consumption

	Calories per capita per day		Per capita consumption growth	Gini coefficient	GNP per capita
	1994-95	1998-99	1980-99		
	Number		*Percent*		*U.S. dollars*
SSA	**2,135**	**2,193**	**-0.4**	**44.8**	**360**
Côte d'Ivoire	2,431	2,587	-1.4	36.7	710
Sengal	2,298	2,287	-0.4	41.3	510
Ethiopia	1,713	1,794	-0.3	40.0	100
Kenya	1,967	1,916	0.2	44.5	360
Zambia	1,947	1,939	-1.8	49.8	320
Zimbabwe	2,004	2,074	0.2	56.8	520

Source: FAO, 2001. World Development Indicators, 2000/1, World Bank.

levels. It should be noted, however, that this growth may be difficult to achieve with the decrease in labor availability and health issues related to HIV/AIDS. Relatively strong growth—greater than 1 percent per year—is projected for Ethiopia, Sudan, Mozambique, and Chad. Mozambique has experienced strong growth in output since the end of the war in 1995. This trend is projected to continue through the next decade with grain production rising at about 5 percent per year. There is potential for much higher yields for corn—the country's staple crop. Mozambique's corn yields were 30 percent below those of Zambia and 17 percent below those of Zimbabwe in the late 1990s.

To illustrate the impact of production variability, we examined the effect on the estimated food gaps when actual 2001 production data is compared with a hypothetical trend-level production forecast. With actual 2001 production levels, the status quo gap is estimated at 6.2 million tons. This gap declines 60 percent when projected trend levels are used. This means that production shortfalls from the trend in 2001 resulted in a more than doubling of expected food gaps. Similar—although not as extreme—results were found when nutrition gaps were estimated.

Historical gains in agricultural production in most countries in the region were largely due to area expansion. In many countries, population pressures and poor farming practices that have led to soil erosion and nutrient-deficient soils have pushed farmers onto marginal lands. These lands are less likely to be productive and are more easily degraded than existing cropland. Although such practices may support subsistence livelihoods for a time, they are likely to have significant negative implications for the welfare of rural and urban populations and the environment over the long term. Given these limitations, substantial increases in crop yields will be needed. Although several factors have a role, improved soil nutrients are identified as the most important component for sustained yield growth in the region. Without sufficient soil nutrients, crop yields cannot increase and respond to improved management practices or other inputs.

Changes in agricultural policies to enhance production incentives and prices received by farmers could affect fertilizer application rates that are crucial to improved productivity rates. Similarly, global trade liberalization is likely to affect fertilizer use as it will increase agricultural prices (in response to higher consumer demand as tariffs are reduced or removed) and enhance world market conditions. Improvements in agricultural education and extension would also assist in expanding the use of improved inputs and agricultural production practices. Improving the performance of extension services in rural areas would aid in education and also teach farmers about possible negative effects associated with the inappropriate use of inputs.

Access to markets has been a significant constraint for Sub-Saharan Africa's farmers. Rural infrastructure development is needed to facilitate transportation, improve seed, tool, and input distribution, and help farmers market output. However, improvements in infrastructure require investment, and the likelihood of a significant increase in investment in these countries is slim. The new Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) initiative does provide some hope, however.

The HIPC initiative should have a positive impact on the economies of these countries and thereby improve the purchasing power of the people. This initiative represents a coordinated effort by the international financial community whose aim it is to reduce the debt burden to sustainable levels for 23 poor countries—most of which are in Sub-Saharan Africa. In order to participate in the program, countries must continue their efforts toward macroeconomic adjustments and structural policy reforms. This debt relief and forgiveness program is expected to reduce debt stock, lower debt service payments, and raise social spending—principally in the areas of education and health care. Uganda and Bolivia are the first two countries to reach the "completion point," meaning that they have implemented appropriate policies and are receiving the agreed-upon debt relief. The amount of debt service relief for each country is estimated at $2 billion. This debt relief should allow them to allocate additional funds toward investment in productive activities that will stimulate their economies, rather than constrain their focus to debt repayment.