

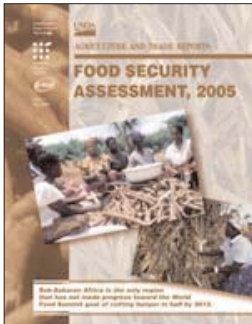
ERS *Report Summary*

Markets and Trade

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*This is a summary
of an ERS report.*

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Food Security Assessment, 2005

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At the World Food Summit (WFS) in November 1996, 186 countries committed themselves to reducing the number of undernourished people by half by 2015. Donors pledged to provide support, in particular, in the area of technological transfers. The commitment to providing food aid was also reinforced. In 2002, the 186 countries reaffirmed their commitment. Now, 10 years after the 1996 summit, there is growing concern about the progress toward meeting the goal.

What Is the Issue?

In Food Security Assessment, 2005, the Economic Research Service (ERS) estimates and projects the number of hungry people globally, regionally, and in each of the 70 lower income countries studied. Hungry people are those consuming less than the nutritional target of 2,100 calories a day. The report also measures the food distribution gap (the amount of food needed to raise consumption of each income group to the nutritional requirement), and examines the factors that shape food security. Food security is defined as access by all people at all times to enough food for an active and healthy life.

What Did the Study Find?

At the aggregate level, there was a slight improvement in food security in the time period starting in 1992, just before the proclamation of the WFS, through the current period. The number of hungry people in the countries studied in this report has declined slightly (7 percent) from 688 million in 1992-94 to 639 million in 2002-04. With the exception of Sub-Saharan Africa, all regions experienced a decrease in the number of hungry people during this 10-year time frame. Both Asia and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) experienced a 30-percent drop in the number of hungry people. The number of hungry people in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) has varied slightly over time.

Between the 2002-04 base period and the 2015 target, ERS projects a 10-percent increase in the distribution gap (the amount of food needed to raise consumption of each income group to the nutritional requirement) and a 16-percent jump in the number of hungry people. If these projections are realized, the goal of the WFS will not come close to being met. It should be noted, however, that there are large variations in results among countries and regions.

The greatest improvement in food security is projected for the LAC region. ERS projects a continuation of the positive trend over the past decade and, as a result, the WFS goal is projected to be met in this region. In 1992-94, there were an estimated 74 million hungry people in the region. By 2015, this number is expected to be cut in half to 37 million. The distribution gap in the LAC region is

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projected to fall by 32 percent between 2002-04 and 2015. The food security situation in North Africa is expected to remain good, and a slight improvement in food security is projected for the CIS region.

The food security situation in Asia is projected to remain virtually unchanged through the next decade, at the aggregate level. The number of hungry people is projected to rise from 214 million in 2002-04 to 228 million in 2015. Obviously, there will be material variations at the country level. Bangladesh, Indonesia, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, and Vietnam are projected to meet the goals set at the WFS.

The food security situation in Sub-Saharan Africa, already the most vulnerable region, is expected to deteriorate even further. The number of hungry people in the region is projected to reach 471 million in 2015, marking a 34-percent increase from 2002-04. The distribution gap is projected to increase 19 percent during the same time period.

Among the 70 countries included in this report, three countries can be considered success stories: Ghana, Peru, and Vietnam. All three countries introduced major reforms in the late 1980s or 1990s. These reforms were based on a stronger reliance on market forces, which fostered economic stability. The agricultural sectors, in particular, benefited from improvements in access to credit and government support of research and extension services.

How Was the Study Conducted?

All historical and projected data are updated relative to last year's Food Security Assessment report. Food production estimates for 2005 are preliminary, based on USDA data as of October 2005, with supplemental data from the UN Food and Agriculture Organization and the World Food Program. Financial and macroeconomic data are based on the latest World Bank data. Projected macroeconomic variables are either extrapolated based on calculated growth rates for the 1990s or are World Bank projections/estimations. Projections/estimates of food availability include food aid, with the assumption that each country will receive the 2002-2004 average level of food aid throughout the next decade.