



2 ZERO HUNGER



SDG 2: End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture in Latin America and the Caribbean¹

Key regional statistics on SDG 2

- The number of undernourished people in Latin America and the Caribbean increased by 2.4 million between 2015 and 2016, reaching a total of 42.5 million, equivalent to 6.6% of the population. It is estimated that 38 million people in the region suffered from severe food insecurity in 2016.²
- Significant progress has been made in reducing chronic malnutrition in children in the region since 1990, particularly in El Salvador, Mexico, Peru and the Plurinational State of Bolivia. Weight-for-height analysis shows that the prevalence of acute malnutrition or wasting is low in the region, affecting less than 2% of children on average. Nevertheless, that still means that more than 7 million children suffer from stunting.
- In Latin American countries for which data are available, small-scale food producers account for between 40% and 85% of all food producers, compared with less than 10% in Europe.
- Latin America and the Caribbean generate less than 10% of total global greenhouse gas emissions, but agriculture accounts for a large share of this percentage: 23% of greenhouse gas emissions, in addition to 19% of emissions owing to land-use changes and forestry.
- It is estimated that between 2005 and 2015, agriculture in the region, including subsectors such as livestock breeding and aquaculture, absorbed economic losses of US\$ 22 billion owing to medium- and high-intensity natural disasters, mainly drought and flooding.
- Progress has been made in the Caribbean with respect to chronic malnutrition, which fell from 8.1 million people in 1990 to 7.5 million in 2016.

¹ The analysis of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) presented here is the outcome of the discussions held within the framework of the third meeting of the Forum of the Countries of Latin America and Caribbean on Sustainable Development, convened under the auspices of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) in Santiago, from 24 to 26 April 2019.

² Whereas undernourishment means that regular food intake is insufficient to meet people's basic energy needs on a continuous basis, food insecurity occurs when people lack secure access to sufficient amounts of safe and nutritious food for normal growth and development and an active and healthy life (see [online] <http://www.fao.org/faoterm/en/>).



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- Food security is crucial for the Caribbean, as in some of these countries food represents up to 50% of imports, compared with the global average of 7%. It is estimated that in at least seven Caribbean countries, 80% or more of food is imported.

Key messages from the region on the issues addressed by SDG 2 and its targets

- The main causes of negative trends hampering the achievement of SDG 2 include the economic recession which has reduced governments' fiscal capacity to shield the most vulnerable populations from price rises and loss of revenue, adverse climate conditions that affect food supply and prices, and prolonged armed conflicts.
- Even though the region produces more foodstuffs than are needed to meet the food security needs of its entire population, it has failed to eradicate chronic malnutrition in children. Furthermore, obesity and micronutrient deficiency have been increasing not only among children, but also among adolescents and the adult population.
- The prevalence of overweight and obesity in children has increased slightly in the region, in line with the overall trend. The prevalence of overweight rose in the general population in Chile, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Haiti, Mexico, Peru and Uruguay, but the number of overweight and obese children under 5 years of age fell.
- Small-scale food producers must receive support to improve their agricultural productivity so that they can strengthen their resilience and adaptive capacity.

Challenges and opportunities identified for the implementation, follow-up and review of SDG 2 and its targets

Challenges

- Malnutrition —whether undernutrition or overnutrition— has a high cost for countries, with consequences throughout the life cycle, and increases the risk of contracting certain diseases, death and worker absenteeism. Chronic malnutrition affects children's cognitive development in the early years, leading to learning deficits in the future.
- Investment in the agricultural sector is essential to reduce hunger and poverty, improve food security, create jobs and build resilience in the face of disasters and emergencies. However, the ratio of public spending on agriculture to the sector's contribution to the economy declined between 2001 and 2017.
- Many small-scale producers and campesinos are poor, have limited resources and capacity, face food insecurity on a regular basis and have limited access to markets and services. Both the income and productivity of small-scale food producers are systematically lower than those of large companies.
- The negative impact of weather events, citizen insecurity and the decline in food production has contributed to high food prices in the region. In Central America, the price of corn increased abruptly in mid-2018, owing in particular to concerns about the effect of very dry weather that season.
- Economic shocks have also pushed up food prices in some countries, while low public inventories and higher fuel costs have led to record prices in others.

Opportunities

- The region has advanced thanks to a new technological revolution in agriculture, and a careful analysis of this transformation, for example, the long-term impact of genetic engineering, is needed to avoid negative effects.



- Within the framework of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, food systems must be sustainable and able to provide for the entire population, to ensure that future generations have sufficient food. There are various opportunities to design and implement policies that ensure that food supply chains, eating environments and consumers are environmentally, culturally and socially respectful.

Lessons learned and good practices with respect to SDG 2 and its targets

- Latin American and Caribbean countries share the challenges of climate change mitigation and adaptation, biodiversity conservation and reduction in greenhouse gas emissions, and the risks of agricultural disasters and crises. Despite these major challenges and the confirmation that there is still a long way to go to achieve agricultural resilience and sustainability, the countries are transforming their traditional agroproduction models and have made progress in fostering sustainable consumption patterns for food and other goods, in order to ensure their sustainability, food security and the livelihoods of a constantly growing population.
- Food systems can be part of the solution, as they involve the entire chain, including production, processing, marketing and consumption, but require profound transformation. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) has outlined five key principles: (i) increase productivity, employment and value added in food systems; (ii) protect and strengthen natural resources; (iii) improve livelihoods and encourage inclusive economic growth; (iv) improve the resilience of people, communities and ecosystems; and (v) adapt governance to new challenges.
- Trade has been fundamental to ensuring food availability in Latin America and the Caribbean. Although caloric availability is sufficient, food production and marketing must be strengthened to promote healthy diets that encourage better nutrition and that include fruits, vegetables and legumes, which help to prevent non-communicable diseases.
- With regard to overnutrition, Chile, Ecuador and Mexico have implemented labelling regulations for foods with high sugar, salt and fat content. Physical activity should also be encouraged, especially among children.
- In Brazil, public health policy incentivizes breastfeeding, with the development of the largest network of maternal milk banks in the world. The Brazilian experience has been replicated in other countries, and in 2015 there were 301 maternal milk banks in the region, including 218 in Brazil.

Recommendations from Latin America and the Caribbean to achieve SDG 2 and its targets

- Intensified efforts are needed to implement and scale up interventions to improve access to safe, nutritious and sufficient food for all.
- Attention should be given specifically to increasing the agricultural productivity and incomes of small-scale food producers, implementing sustainable agricultural practices, and ensuring the proper functioning of markets, for example, by correcting and preventing trade restrictions and distortions in world agricultural markets in order to limit extreme food price volatility.
- Ensure that no one is left behind on the road towards zero hunger, to break the intergenerational cycle of malnutrition.
- Small-scale food producers are an integral part of the solution to hunger. They should be empowered to participate fully in development and thus improve food security and reduce poverty and hunger.





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- Small-scale food producers need training to manage their natural resources sustainably, adapt to climate change and overcome barriers of entry to markets, financial services and information.
- If inequality in food security and nutrition is not addressed, the promise and commitment to leave no one behind will remain unfulfilled. Efforts should be made to understand why chronic malnutrition, micronutrient deficiency, overweight and obesity affect people with the lowest incomes, women, indigenous peoples, Afrodescendants and rural families differently.
- Amid the backdrop of a slow economic recovery, food and nutrition security can only be achieved if social protection and productive inclusion policies and programmes are strengthened and expanded. They should ensure that growth benefits all sectors of the population, reducing gaps and paying special attention to disadvantaged social sectors and territories.

