

Asia

Afghanistan experienced a second consecutive year of drought in 2001, which is compounded by ongoing conflict, leading to a food gap of 1.9 million tons to meet recent per capita consumption levels (excluding refugee considerations). North Korea also is experiencing a food supply shortfall this year, with a food gap of 1.7 million tons. Elsewhere, the number of hungry people in Asia appears to be on the decline. [Michael Trueblood]

There is a severe shortfall in food availability this year in Afghanistan. The country has experienced a second consecutive year of drought, leading to grain output that is estimated to be about 34 percent below the recent trend. Refugee movements related to the recent war have exacerbated these production shocks. In order to meet a target of the most recent per capita consumption levels (excluding refugee considerations), the food gap is estimated to be about 1.9 million tons, or 44 percent of the target level. To reach minimum nutritional levels, about 3 million tons of grain are required. The situation is projected to remain acute over the next decade, requiring perhaps as much as 3.3 million tons annually to meet nutritional needs.

North Korea also is experiencing a severe food supply shortfall this year, though not as intense as Afghanistan's deficit. North Korea's grain output is about 7 percent below trend, following last year's decline of 6 percent. To meet recent per capita consumption levels, about 1.7 million tons are required (about 26 percent of the overall food supply). Over the next decade, this food gap is estimated to decline, but still remain relatively high (about 1.2 million tons, or 17 percent below present food supply requirements). Food availability across all income groups presently is inadequate to meet minimum nutrition standards; the situation is not projected to change very much in the next decade, except for the top income quintile.

The number of hungry people in other countries in Asia appears to be on the decline. ERS estimates that in the mid-1990s about 510 million Asian people were hungry (that is, they did not meet minimum nutritional requirements). That number has declined to about 484 million people in 2001. By 2011, it is estimated that the number of hungry people will be about 328 million people.

Most of the decreases in the number of hungry people can be explained by increased purchasing power of the lowest income groups in Bangladesh and India. Today,

only the bottom income quintile in Bangladesh fails to meet their nutritional requirements, compared with the bottom two quintiles in 1995. This is explained in part by three consecutive good food harvests as well as sustained real economic growth, which has averaged 3.7 percent per person per year over the last decade. Bangladesh's economy has been helped by the rapid growth in exports of textiles and clothing.

In India, food supplies have continued to increase. The country has become a significant grain exporter, while food stocks are at record levels. The challenge now is to improve access to food for the lowest income groups in that country. The bottom two income quintiles presently fail to meet nutritional requirements, but it is projected that only the bottom quintile will fail to do so by 2006. India has more than doubled its per capita GDP growth rate in the last decade compared with the previous decade (3.5 percent per annum versus 1.6 percent). Some of this economic growth is due to important policy changes and greater trade orientation. If sustained, the growth has the potential to lift millions of people out of poverty. India's longrun food supply situation also is helped by an easing of the population growth rate, which is expected to level out to 1.1 percent annually in the next decade from its present rate of 1.6 percent per year.

In Nepal, average per capita consumption levels are above nutritional requirements, but the country faces relatively minor food deficits to meet the present consumption levels. This problem may intensify in the next decade. Inadequate access to food for the lowest income groups is projected to increase in the future. Production largely accounts for the total food supply, but production is not projected to grow as fast as population, thereby putting pressure on future food supplies. Land expansion possibilities are limited, so yield growth rates will have to increase from the historical rates to eradicate the problem. Imports are not expected to grow very much, given the country's

landlocked and rugged geography that makes it expensive to transport food inland.

The other five countries in the Asian region that are included in this report (Indonesia, Pakistan, Philippines, Sri Lanka, and Vietnam) generally can be characterized as having adequate food supplies at the national level in the short and long run. All income groups also are projected to have adequate access to food to meet nutrition requirements, both now and over the next decade.

A common concern throughout the region is the limited opportunity to expand land area, compounded by yield growth rates that are starting to slow down. Increasingly, farmers in the region are bringing marginal land into production. Average yields continue to increase robustly in Bangladesh and Vietnam, but in the other countries, yields are starting to either plateau or decline. Environmental problems associated with irrigation also appear to be increasing.

Table 4—Food availability and food gaps for Asia

Year	Grain production	Root production	Commercial imports	Food aid receipts (grains)	Aggregate availability of all food
			---1,000 tons---		
1992	280,809	15,792	11,590	1,769	401,645
1993	286,011	15,631	11,486	1,792	406,929
1994	289,925	15,690	10,893	1,942	417,722
1995	299,303	15,659	17,813	2,107	437,234
1996	303,206	16,382	17,116	1,686	445,134
1997	307,064	17,199	16,363	2,105	446,409
1998	316,716	16,790	17,908	4,553	456,803
1999	329,246	17,360	22,540	3,200	473,080
2000	330,645	17,383	21,012	3,145	479,877
Projections					
				Food gap	
				SQ	NR
				(w/o food aid)	
2001	324,975	17,231	21,140	3,772	3,878
2006	366,717	18,604	24,420	2,728	2,986
2011	398,323	20,069	27,827	3,513	3,716

Asia

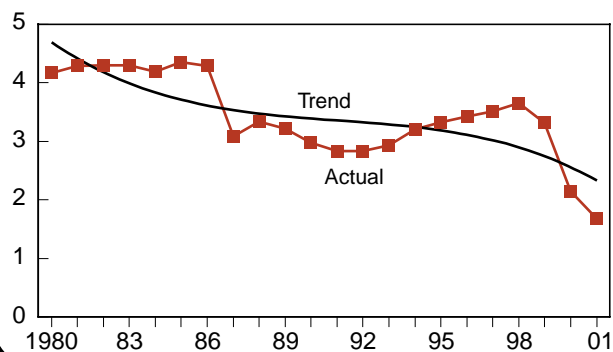
1,737 million people

Afghanistan has experienced a second consecutive drought, which is compounded by ongoing conflict, leading to a food gap of 1.9 million tons to meet recent per capita consumption levels (excluding refugee considerations). North Korea also is experiencing a food supply shortfall this year, with a food gap of 1.7 million tons.

The number of hungry people in Asia is projected to decline from 484 million people in 2001 to 328 million people in 2011. Most of the decreases are projected to come from the lowest income groups in Bangladesh and India.

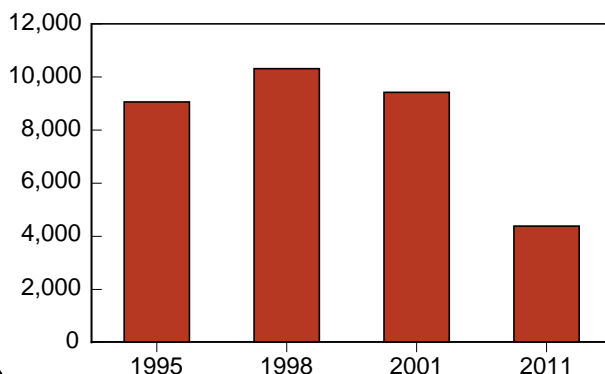
Afghanistan's grain production is down again in 2001

Mil. tons



Distribution gaps in Asia

1,000 tons



Asia: 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
Asia	2,276	2,331	1.6	36.6	506
Afghanistan	1,557	1,799	--	--	--
Bangladesh	2,022	2,157	1.4	33.6	370
India	2,420	2,408	1.7	37.8	450
Indonesia	2,891	2,915	2.9	36.5	580
Korea, Dem. Rep.	2,180	2,106	--	--	--
Pakistan	2,397	2,459	1.4	31.2	470

-- = Not available.

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