



International Food Security Assessment, 2019-2029

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What Is the Issue?

International food price spikes over the past decade have challenged the food security of vulnerable populations, as evidenced by riots due in part to sharp increases in prices of basic foods in some parts of the world, from Haiti to Bangladesh to Egypt. Low food prices and rising incomes can improve a country's food security situation because people can more readily afford and access food. The speed of improvement in food security is also affected by inequality in income and consumption, as well as by agricultural production and market conditions. For example, if average income gains accrue predominantly to lower income households, thus making income distribution more equal, food security will improve faster than if inequality in incomes widens. Understanding how these factors collectively affect food supply and demand provides a measure of progress in food security. This report assesses food security indicators for 76 low- and middle-income countries grouped into four regions: Sub-Saharan Africa (39 countries), North Africa (4 countries), Latin America and the Caribbean (11 countries), and Asia (22 countries).

What Did the Study Find?

In 14 out of 76 countries, more than 50 percent of their populations were estimated to be food insecure in 2019. Eight of those countries are in Central and East Africa, one in West and Southern Africa each, and three in Asia. Haiti is the most food-insecure country in the Western Hemisphere, with 47 percent estimated to be food insecure in 2019.

Given projections for lower food prices and rising incomes for most countries in this report, food security generally is expected to improve between 2019 and 2029. Food security is assessed using three indicators, all of which are projected to improve:

- The share of the food-insecure population is expected to fall from 19.3 percent to 9.2 percent.
- The number of food-insecure people is projected to fall from 728 million to 399 million.
- The food gap—the amount of food required to allow all food-insecure people to reach the caloric target of 2,100 calories per person per day—is projected to decline from 33.5 million tons to 21.9 million tons.

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Gains in food security vary across regions.

- In **Asia**, where income growth is strong, the share of the food-insecure population is projected to decline from 13.9 percent in 2019 to 3.5 percent in 2029.
- The challenge is greater in **Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA)** where population growth is higher and income growth lower. In 2019, SSA has an estimated 35.3 percent of its population food insecure; despite improvements, 22.5 percent are still projected to be food insecure in 2029.
- In **Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC)**, the share of the population that is food insecure is projected to drop from 17.4 percent in 2019 to 8.3 percent in 2029.
- Food security is also projected to improve for **North Africa**, the most food-secure region in the study. There, the share of the population that is food insecure falls from 5.2 percent in 2019 to 1.9 percent in 2029.

Of note, these projections show potential improvements assuming favorable income and price trends. The projections do not include predictions of future weather and conflict-induced crises and food shortfalls—constant challenges in some of the most food-insecure countries—and therefore are most representative of a baseline scenario.

How Was the Study Conducted?

The ERS demand-oriented International Food Security Assessment (IFSA) model projects food demand and food gaps in 76 low- and middle-income countries through 2029. Food security is evaluated for each country by estimating the share of the population unable to reach a caloric target of 2,100 calories per person per day. The intensity of food insecurity is measured by determining the gap between projected food demand for those falling below the threshold and the caloric target. Food demand is expressed in grain equivalents based on caloric content to allow aggregation across four separate food groups: the major grain consumed in the country, other grains, roots and tubers, and all other food. Average per capita food consumption data are from the United Nations' Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) Food Balance Sheets and FAO's cereal balances. Observed domestic prices are from FAO's Global Information Early Warning System (GIEWS) database. Tariff data are from the World Bank World Integrated Trade Solution (WITS). Incomes, exchange rates, and Consumer Price Indexes (CPI) are from the ERS International Macroeconomic Dataset. World prices are from USDA's Agricultural Projections to 2028.