

**Economic Commission for Africa****Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development**

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**High-level panel on the challenges and opportunities arising  
in achieving inclusive growth and prosperity for all****Background paper on ending hunger and achieving  
food security in Africa<sup>1</sup>****I. Introduction and overview****Sustainable Development Goal 2 provides a comprehensive,  
integrated approach for ending hunger, food insecurity and  
malnutrition, and promoting agricultural and rural  
transformation**

1. Goal 2 encapsulates three closely related themes: ending hunger, achieving food security and improving nutrition; achieving sustainable agriculture; and increasing the productivity, incomes and resilience of small and other producers. The three themes broadly address the various dimensions of food insecurity – food availability, food accessibility and food stability – by focusing on its root causes, namely low productivity, inadequate purchasing power and inefficient production systems. In combination, those root causes have exacerbated hunger in Africa – indeed, food insecurity is seen by many as a quintessential African phenomenon. An integrated and comprehensive approach to food insecurity, based on the themes encapsulated in Goal 2, can tackle food insecurity in a range of contexts, including acute hunger situations, and in the medium- to long-term, can foster agricultural and rural transformation in which rural populations are empowered as critical agents of change.

2. The achievement of Goal 2 will also complement and contribute to the achievement of other Sustainable Development Goals, including, in particular, the Goals relating to poverty eradication, gender equality and women's empowerment, education, water and sanitation, peace and good governance, and ecosystem management. Like other Goals, Goal 2 promotes growth, prosperity and sustainability. To end hunger, a two-pronged approach is required: firstly, facilitating sustained agricultural productivity growth with a view to boosting the incomes of small-scale producers and rural populations and promoting inclusive growth and prosperity; secondly, strengthening social safety nets with a view to enhancing the purchasing power of the poorest members of society. In that regard, ongoing efforts to eradicate

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\* E/ECA/ARFSD/3/1

<sup>1</sup> This background paper was jointly prepared by the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO).

hunger are achieving prosperity, particularly in rural areas, and promoting sustainable agriculture.

3. Given its scope and ambitious targets, the achievement of Goal 2 in Africa will not be easy; indeed, it will require the establishment of efficient, socially inclusive and environmentally sustainable food systems that provide everyone with access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food. For this to occur, effective social protection regimes are needed, as is the adoption of sustainable agriculture practices and the implementation of biodiversity conservation initiatives. Efforts are needed to boost the incomes of smallholder farmers, fishermen, foresters and pastoralists, while increased investments must also be made in agriculture, agribusinesses and related infrastructure. Efficient food and agricultural markets must also be established in Africa, together with mechanisms that provide for timely responses to meet urgent food needs resulting from conflicts and natural disasters.

4. In view of the rapid urbanization taking place in Africa, achieving Goal 2, as well as a number of related goals, will necessitate efforts to spur rural transformation and the strengthening of links between rural communities and urban centres. This could be achieved through targeted investments in infrastructure, in food systems capable of delivering safe, sustainable, and nutritious food to urban markets, and by expanding economic opportunities for rural and peri-urban populations along the supply chain. One key prerequisite is to improve productive capacities by ensuring that rural populations, especially women and young people, enjoy adequate affordable access to financial services, land, education, technology, relevant infrastructure and other productive assets.

## II. Implementation progress

5. The aspirations outlined above are in line with targets established by the Millennium Development Goals. It cannot be denied, however, that hunger and malnutrition remain huge impediments to development in most African countries. It is estimated that almost one in four Africans – some 230 million people – are chronically undernourished, and approximately 25 per cent of children under the age of five are substantially below the standard heights for their ages. That situation is, without doubt, exacerbated by the ongoing underperformance of African agriculture as a result of daunting challenges, including environmental degradation, climate change-related phenomena, decreasing biodiversity, and most significantly, chronic under capitalization.

6. Goal 2 aims to end all forms of hunger and malnutrition by 2030, ensuring that all people, particularly children, enjoy access to safe, sufficient and nutritious food all year round. To achieve that Goal, efforts are needed to increase agricultural productivity, including through the promotion of sustainable agricultural practices, the provision of support to small-scale farmers to facilitate their access to land, technology and markets, international cooperation to reduce price distortion in global commodity markets, further investment in infrastructure development, and the transfer and sharing of technology.

**Goal 2, which reads: “End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture”, posts five specific targets. Progress towards the achievement of that Goal is measured by assessing progress towards those targets.**

**Target 2.1 Food for All:** *by 2030 end hunger and ensure access by all people to safe, nutritious and sufficient food all year round*

7. The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) estimates that in 2016, some 793 million people – approximately 10.8 per cent of the world’s population –

remained food insecure, i.e. undernourished<sup>2</sup>. That statistic represents an improvement, in that, compared with the statistics for 2010-2012, some 28 million fewer people suffered chronic food insecurity. Moreover, by 2015–2016, undernourishment in Africa stood at 19.8 per cent – a decline of some 28 per cent compared with the statistics for 1990-1992 (see figure 1).

8. There was however, significant variation among the different African subregions. Undernourishment in North Africa was less than 5 per cent. West Africa was the region that witnessed the most striking improvement, with undernourishment declining by some 63 per cent between 1990-1992 and 2014-2016. On the other hand, Middle Africa witnessed a 23 per cent increase in undernourishment. The remaining two regions experienced a decline of between 28 and 33 over the same period (see figure 2). Without doubt, strong political commitment to the promotion of food security, supported by the momentum of the Comprehensive African Agriculture Development Programme has contributed to these tangible results. Furthermore, there is now greater recognition among African Governments of the importance of peace and stability in the fight against food insecurity in Africa.

**Target 2.2 End malnutrition:** *by 2030 end all forms of malnutrition, including achieving by 2025 the internationally agreed targets on stunting and wasting in children under five years of age, and address the nutritional needs of adolescent girls, pregnant and lactating women, and older persons*

9. A household is said to be food secure if it can reliably gain access to food in sufficient quantity and quality for all household members. It is possible however, for individuals in food-secure households to have deficient or unbalanced diets. As a result, malnutrition takes place if an individual's diet falls short of providing adequate calories and protein necessary for growth and maintenance. Malnutrition occurs as well if individuals are unable to fully utilize the food they consume due to illness.

10. Children in Africa excluding North Africa suffer the second highest rates of stunting and wasting in the world (see figure 3). While Africa, excluding North Africa, has made the least progress compared with other subregions in reducing stunting (a reduction of only 24 per cent between 1990-1994 and 2011-2015), it has successfully reduced wasting over the same period by some 31 per cent.

11. Recent data reveal that, overall, African countries have significantly improved child nutrition (see figure 3). Since 1992, the prevalence of wasting in Africa has decreased by approximately 15 per cent and now stands at 7.8 per cent. Moreover, although stunting is more prevalent in Africa than wasting, and now stands at some 30 per cent, it still declined by 25 per cent between 1992 and 2016.

12. All subregions in Africa have experienced a decline in the prevalence of stunting. Southern and West Africa have been the best performers, successfully reducing the prevalence of stunting by 30 and 27 per cent, respectively, between 1990-1994 and 2011-2015 (see figure 5). Despite sustained progress, the prevalence of stunting in East Africa, which now stands at 37 per cent, remains unacceptably high, and there is a clear need for strong political will to address that issue.

13. The prevalence of wasting is substantially lower than the prevalence of stunting in all African subregions and, as shown in figure 6, all subregions, except North Africa and East Africa, have witnessed a decrease in the prevalence of wasting. In that regard, it should be noted that the North Africa subregion has recently experienced a 73 per cent surge in the prevalence of wasting, with most of that surge occurring after the Arab Spring.

**Target 2.3 Improved incomes of small-scale food producers:** *by 2030 double the agricultural productivity and the incomes of small-scale food producers, particularly women, indigenous peoples, family farmers, pastoralists and fishers, including through secure and equal access to land, other productive resources and inputs,*

<sup>2</sup> *Food Security Indicators 2016*, Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO), Rome, 2016.

*knowledge, financial services, markets, and opportunities for value addition and non-farm employment*

14. While most African countries have taken steps to boost the incomes of small-scale farmers, primarily by improving their productivity, there is, as yet, no substantive evidence that the agricultural productivity of small-scale farmers has actually improved and no aggregated data on such productivity. As about 90 per cent of agricultural output in Africa is produced on land holdings of two hectares or less, the present report extrapolates data on overall agricultural productivity, which, it is assumed, largely reflects the productivity of small-scale farmers.

15. As maize is produced primarily by small-scale farmers in all African countries, maize yield has been selected as a proxy indicator for the productivity and incomes of small-scale producers. Furthermore, maize is a stable crop in almost all African countries. Despite an annual growth rate of approximately 1 per cent since 2000, Africa's maize yield was only 38 per cent of the global total in 2014, the most recent year for which data exists. While Africa's maize yield increased by 15.5 per cent between 2000 and 2014, global output increased by 30 per cent over the same period. There were moreover, significant variations among African subregions. Southern Africa and West Africa – the best performers – saw maize productivity increase by 78 and 30 per cent, respectively, over the period in question. The yield in Southern Africa was particularly impressive and stood at almost 2.2 times the African average. Yields in the North Africa subregion remained significantly higher than the global average (figure 7).

16. The productivity of small-scale farmers in Africa remains low, and they have little surplus available for sale at markets, undermining their financial security and exacerbating food insecurity. It is clear that African countries must take action to improve yields with a view to boosting the incomes of small-scale farmers.

**Target 2.4 Sustainable food production:** *by 2030 ensure sustainable food production systems and implement resilient agricultural practices that increase productivity and production, that help maintain ecosystems, that strengthen capacity for adaptation to climate change, extreme weather, drought, flooding and other disasters, and that progressively improve land and soil quality*

**Target 2.5 Sustainable diversity:** *by 2020 maintain genetic diversity of seeds, cultivated plants, farmed and domesticated animals and their related wild species, including through soundly managed and diversified seed and plant banks at national, regional and international levels, and ensure access to and fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from the utilization of genetic resources and associated traditional knowledge as internationally agreed*

17. The maintenance of genetic diversity in livestock supports agricultural activity and food production by ensuring that livestock can be raised in a wide range of environments and provide a wide range of products and services, including food, fibres, manure and draught power. Livestock genetic diversity is threatened by a number of factors, including the increasing homogeneity of the world's livestock production systems, and inappropriate management strategies and policies. To draw up effective measures to promote the sustainable use, development and conservation of animal genetic resources, accurate data is needed on the diversity of those resources both within countries and globally.

18. A total of 739 extant local breeds (i.e. breeds occurring in only one country) were known in Africa in February 2017. Of those breeds, 88 per cent were classified as of unknown status, 2 per cent were classified as at-risk, and 10 per cent as not at risk. There were significant variations across subregions, however. For example, there were no local breeds whose risk status was known in Middle and Northern Africa, either due to a lack of population size data, or of relevant data in the FAO Domestic Animal Diversity Information System (DAD-IS)<sup>3</sup>, while the risk status of

<sup>3</sup> [http://www.fao.org/ag/againfo/programmes/en/genetics/documents/DAD-IS\\_Manual\\_Jan092.pdf](http://www.fao.org/ag/againfo/programmes/en/genetics/documents/DAD-IS_Manual_Jan092.pdf).

21 per cent of local breeds in Southern Africa was known, with 9 per cent of breeds in that subregion classified as at-risk and 12 per cent as not at risk. These statistics underscore the pressing need for more accurate data on livestock in African countries (figure 8).

**Target 2(a) Agricultural productive capacity:** *increase investment, including through enhanced international cooperation, in rural infrastructure, agricultural research and extension services, technology development, and plant and livestock gene banks to enhance agricultural productive capacity in developing countries, in particular in least developed countries*

19. The agriculture orientation index for government expenditures has been selected as the most appropriate indicator for this target. Compiled by FAO, the index is the ratio of government expenditures on agriculture compared with the contribution made by agriculture to the economy, and is an indication of the prominence given by governments to agriculture relative to its economic weight.<sup>4</sup>

20. Agriculture orientation index statistics reveal a sharp decline in total government expenditure on agriculture in Africa between 2008 and 2011. Since 2011, however, African countries have once more increased expenditure (see figure 9).

21. In the two main African subregions – North Africa and Africa excluding North Africa – governments spend less proportionally, on agriculture than governments in other regions; it is likely that this is because African Governments are devoting increasing attention to industrialization and privatization (see figure 10).

22. The total official development assistance allocated to agriculture in Africa increased by 36 per cent between 2007 and 2015, however, that increase, which totalled \$574 million, did not offset cuts in government expenditure on agriculture (see figure 11). Furthermore, although overall official development assistance to Africa significantly increased over that period, the share of such assistance allocated to agriculture increased only from 4.13 to 4.9 per cent.

23. At the global level, agriculture in Africa has continued to receive the lion's share of agricultural official development assistance allocated to developing countries. Indeed, Africa's share of global official development assistance allocated to agriculture increased from 36.5 to 42 per cent between 2007 and 2015. That upward trend reflects growing recognition of the critical role played by agriculture in promoting sustained, inclusive economic growth, and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (see figure 12).

**Target 2(b) Trade restrictions in agricultural markets:** *correct and prevent trade restrictions and distortions in world agricultural markets including by the parallel elimination of all forms of agricultural export subsidies and all export measures with equivalent effect, in accordance with the mandate of the Doha Development Round*

24. The world seems to be moving towards fewer agricultural trade restrictions and distortions. In that regard, the Ministerial Decision of the World Trade Organization (WTO) on export completion, adopted on 19 December 2015 at the Tenth WTO Ministerial Conference,<sup>5</sup> is certainly a step towards ending the sustained distortion of market prices of agricultural products. That Decision provides: "Developed Members shall immediately eliminate their remaining scheduled export subsidy entitlements as of the date of adoption of this Decision" and "Developing country Members shall eliminate their export subsidy entitlements by the end of

<sup>4</sup> An agriculture orientation index with a value greater than 1 indicates that a government has given more prominence to agriculture relative to its contribution to the economy (as measured by gross domestic product (GDP)). An index of less than 1 indicates that governments of these countries give greater prominence to non-agricultural sectors.

<sup>5</sup> Available at <https://www.scribd.com/document/309533107/WTO-Nairobi-Package-pdf>.

2018". The Decision calls on all countries to abolish all forms of export subsidy, including export credit, export credit guarantees and insurance programmes for exports of agricultural products. Undoubtedly, the adoption of the Decision was a major milestone in a long journey to end a harmful protection system that focused on protecting inefficient farmers, particularly in countries that are members of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). Indeed, entrenched and sustained protection regimes have caused substantial harm to small-scale farmers and have further exacerbated food insecurity.

25. Data on agricultural producer support are available only for a limited number of African countries and therefore provides for only a partial understanding of producer support in Africa. However, due to its well-documented negative impact on agricultural production in developing countries, and in African countries in particular, a review of producer support in developed countries was conducted in the preparation of this report. That review revealed that agricultural producer support is declining slowly worldwide, paving the way for more equitable global trade in agriculture. Indeed, as illustrated below, as a percentage of gross farm receipts, agricultural producer support in the European Union and the United States of America declined by 42 and 58 per cent, respectively, between 2000 and 2015.

26. In absolute terms, agricultural producer support in the United States declined by 24 per cent between 2000 and 2015, compared with an increase of 4 per cent in the European Union. It should be noted, however, that the 2015 estimate for producer support in the European Union suggests a decline of 35 per cent compared with 2008, when support reached its peak.<sup>6</sup> Overall, agricultural producer support in OECD countries declined by 14 per cent between 2000 and 2015 (see figure 14).

**Target 2(c) Functioning food commodity markets and their derivatives:** *adopt measures to ensure the proper functioning of food commodity markets and their derivatives, and facilitate timely access to market information, including on food reserves, in order to help limit extreme food price volatility*

27. In 2016, 21 countries in Africa experienced high or moderately high domestic prices relative to their historical levels for one or more staple cereal food commodities. Of those 21 countries, 13 were in Sub-Saharan Africa, where the main causes of high prices were domestic output declines, currency depreciation and, in some countries, insecurity. Localized increases in fuel prices provided further support. As shown in the table 1, maize was the commodity that recorded price anomalies in the highest number of countries and markets.

### **III. Emerging issues and challenges**

#### **A. Inadequate monitoring of and reporting on progress towards the achievement of Goal 2**

28. Most countries require technical support to strengthen the capacity of their national statistical institutions to monitor and report on progress achieved. National assessments mechanisms that make use of innovative indicators can help identify adjustments to policies and associated programmes that are needed to achieve the 2030 Agenda. Enhanced measurement of Sustainable Development Goal indicators has the potential to drive transformational change. Although certain Goal 2 indicators are well established, there is still a pressing need for comprehensive, integrated and cost-effective mechanisms to monitor and report on sustainable agriculture and smallholder income and productivity.

#### **B. Droughts and floods**

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<sup>6</sup> PSE/CSE database, Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), Paris, 2016.

29. Frequent droughts, changing precipitation patterns and extreme weather conditions in many parts of Africa, especially in the Horn of Africa, Sahel and Southern Africa regions, continue to pose serious food security and nutrition challenges. In the Horn of Africa Region, for instance, a major drought occurs almost every five years, which leads to humanitarian crisis, and sometimes to a famine condition. Currently, about 20 million people in Eastern Africa are in urgent need for humanitarian assistance due to the cumulative effects of a recurrent drought. As a consequence, massive resources committed by national governments and development partners have been diverted from long term development programmes and priorities aimed at achieving SDGs to address short term emergencies to save human lives and livelihoods.

### C. Urbanization

30. The rapid urbanization experienced at the moment in the whole continent of Africa has indeed a number of implications on the existing food systems, including at all levels of value chains. In particular, the immigration from rural to urban areas is not only depriving the farming systems from much-needed labour forces due to widely perceived low productivity, but also exerting mounting pressure on the food systems in urban areas. In addition to which, changes in consumption patterns have far-reaching implications on food security and nutrition. It is projected that half of the African population will be residing in urban and pre-urban areas by 2050. Adequate investment in upgrading agribusiness value chains and pre-urban food systems is urgently needed to meet the food demand of the steadily growing urban population.

## IV. Strategic policy recommendations to facilitate the achievement of Goal 2 and its associated targets

### Recommendations

31. *To facilitate the effective implementation of the Goals, each national government should establish the right institutional framework.* In this regard the establishment of the following is suggested: (a) a national inter-ministerial committee that reports to the head of government and monitors implementation of the Goals with a view to ensuring their alignment with the country's sustainable development strategies and priorities; (b) monitoring and evaluation units in line ministries (to support the follow up of relevant policies and programmes; (c) and a strategic planning and monitoring and evaluation unit in the ministry responsible for international cooperation to promote development cooperation at all stages of the official development assistance management cycle. The unit should also work closely with all relevant United Nations development systems and other development partners as related to the provision of technical and financial assistance with a view to supporting implementation of the Goals; and (d) a sustainable development unit within the national statistical agency to oversee the monitoring and evaluation of Sustainable Development Goal implementation and national transformation strategies.

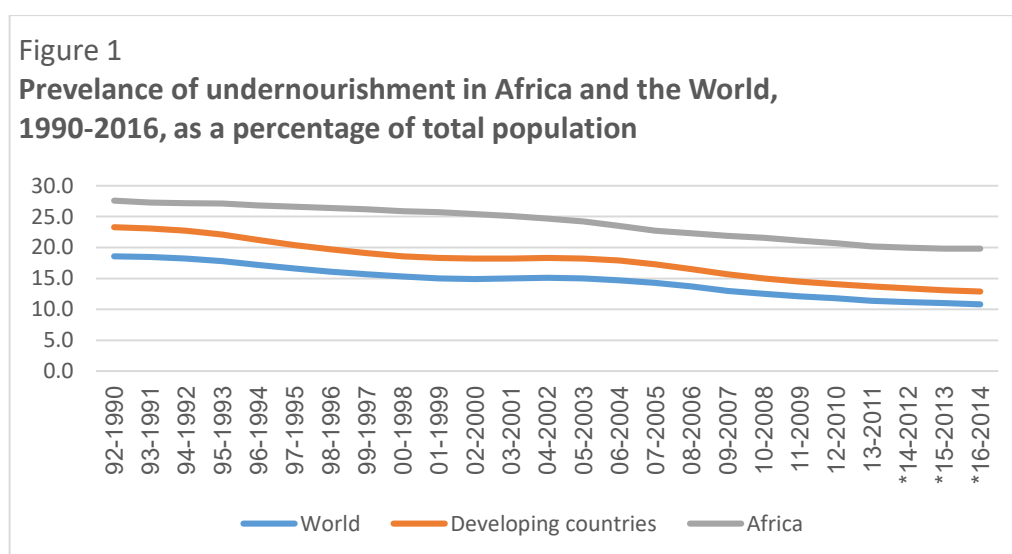
32. With the support of their development partners, national governments should establish and strengthen comprehensive, integrated and cost-effective mechanisms to monitor and report on Sustainable Development Goal implementation.

33. National governments should commit sufficient political, institutional and financial resources to address the root causes of hunger and malnutrition. In this context, national governments are encouraged to adopt an integrated, multi-sectoral approach, including the involvement of private sector and CSOs. Immediate priority should be allocated to address the structural challenges that are pervasive in Africa's

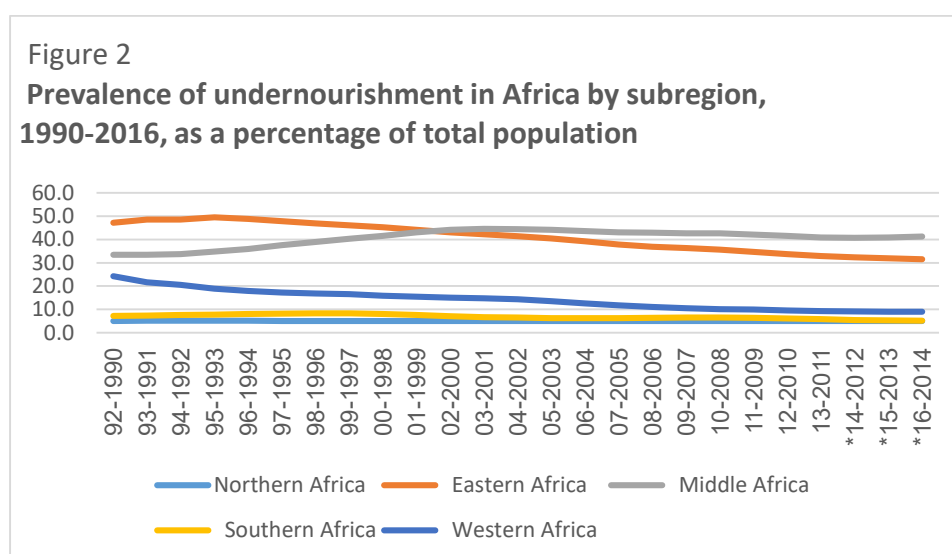
agriculture sector including, notably, low agricultural productivity, post-harvest losses, disconnection between input and outputs markets, and poor resilience. African countries should collectively, support regional initiatives that aim at enhancing food accessibility, including, the Continental Free Trade Area, promotion of regional agricultural value chains and the Africa Agribusiness Strategy.

34. *African countries should participate in the High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development*, which serves as the platform for reviewing and following up on implementation of the Goals. The platform facilitates peer-learning and the sharing of best practices, and promotes mutually-beneficial cooperation in line with national priorities, while respecting participating States' national sovereignty.

## V. Figures and table

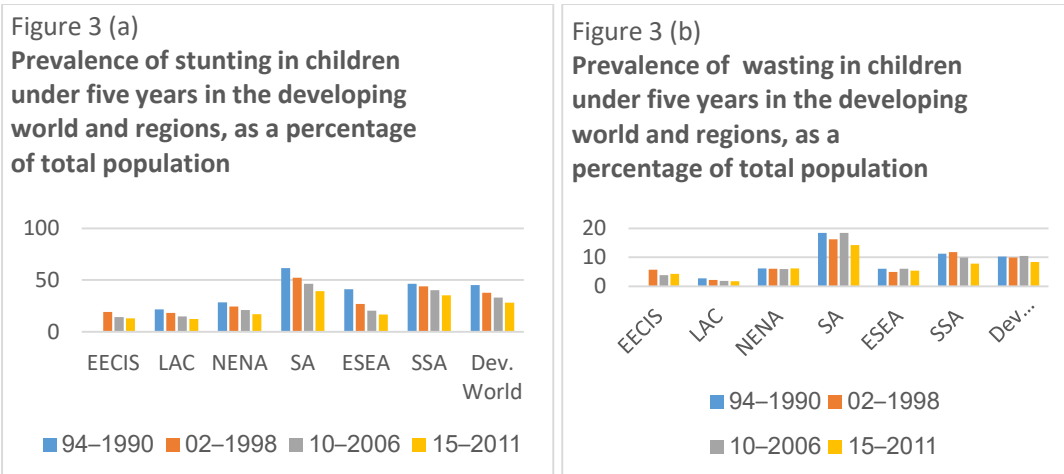


Source: *Food Security Indicators 2016*, Food and Agricultural Organization, Rome, 2016.



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Key to abbreviations:

EECIS: Eastern Europe and Commonwealth of Independent States

LAC: Latin America and the Caribbean

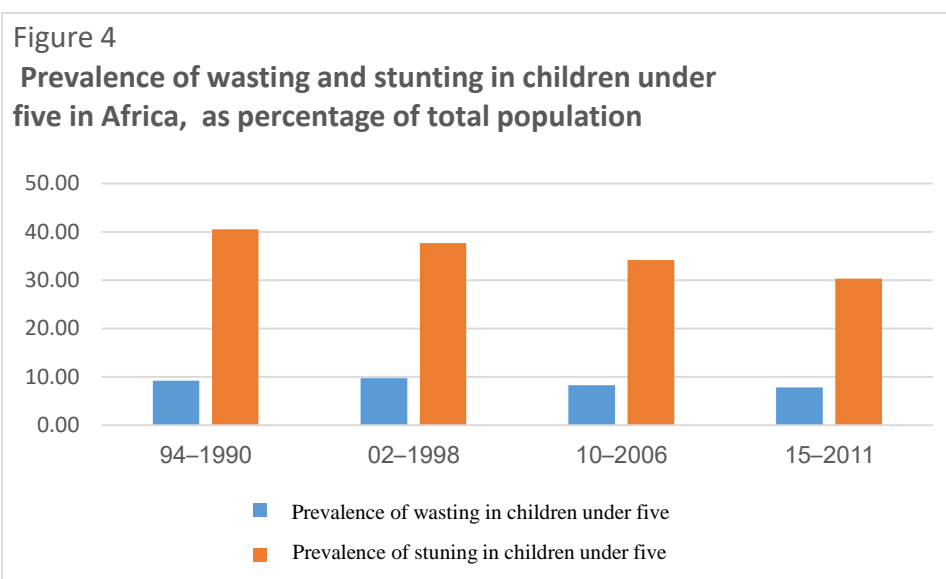
NENA: Near East and North Africa

SA: South Asia

ESEA: East and South East Asia

SSA: Sub-Saharan Africa

Source: Based on data contained in *2016 Global Hunger Index Data*. International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), Washington, DC. Available at <http://ghi.ifpri.org/results/>.

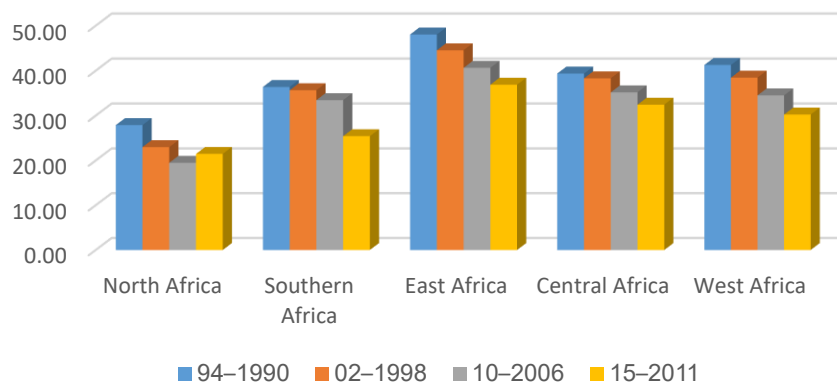


Note: These estimates are averages of individual country values, as provided by the source indicated below; each individual country value is an average of values collected over the relevant time period. For example, the value provided for 2011-2015 is the average of individual country values collected from survey data for years 2011 to 2015.

Source: Based on data contained in *2016 Global Hunger Index Data*. International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), Washington, DC. Available at <http://dx.doi.org/10.7910/DVN/LU8KRU>.

Figure 5

**Prevalence of stunting in children under five in Africa by subregion, as a percentage of total population**

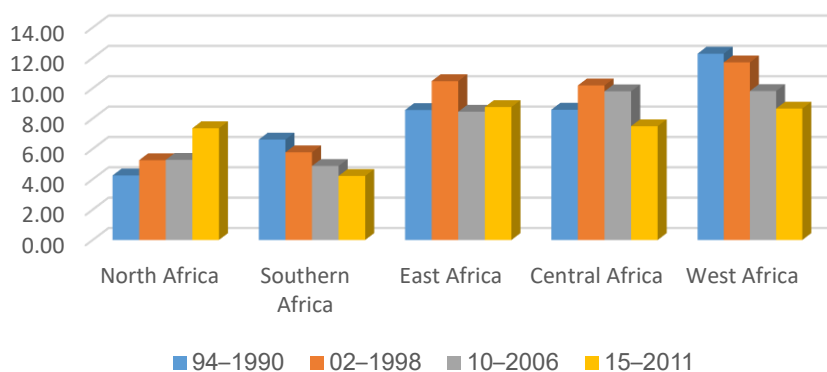


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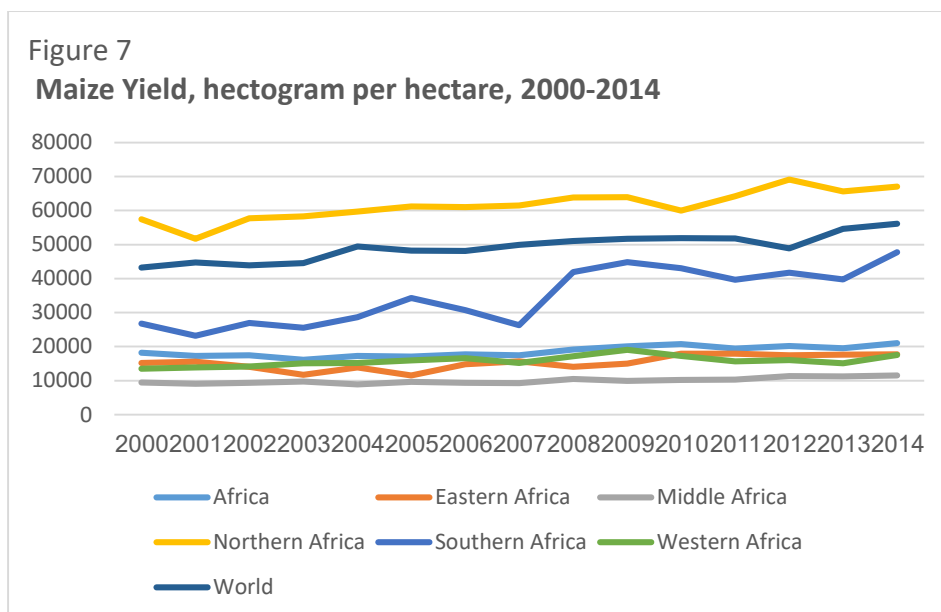
Figure 6

**Prevalence of wasting in children under five years of age in Africa by subregion, as a percentage of total population**

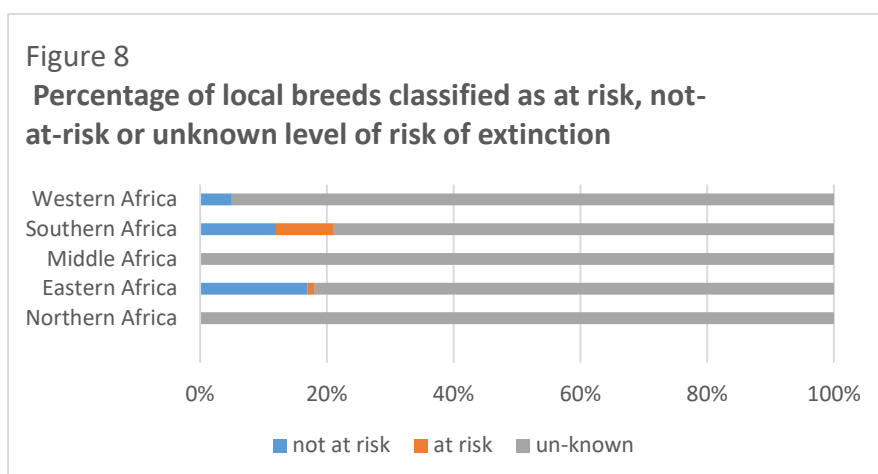


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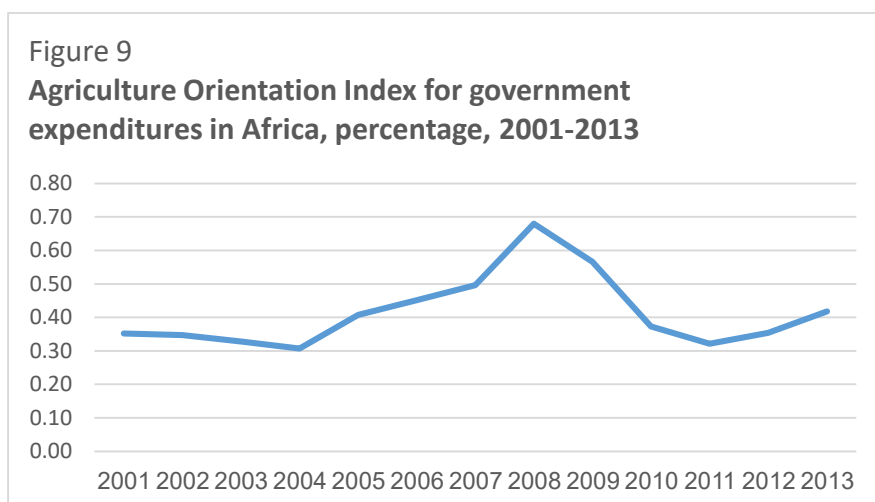
Source: Based on data contained in *2016 Global Hunger Index Data*. International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), Washington, DC. Available at <http://dx.doi.org/10.7910/DVN/LU8KRU>.



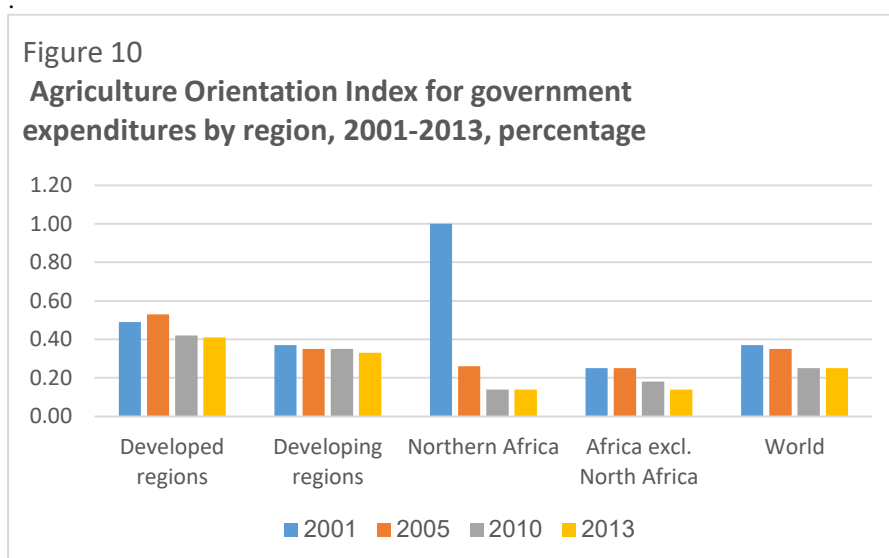
Source: FAOSTAT, Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), Rome; available at: <http://www.fao.org/faostat/en>.



Source: Unpublished data, Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), Rome.

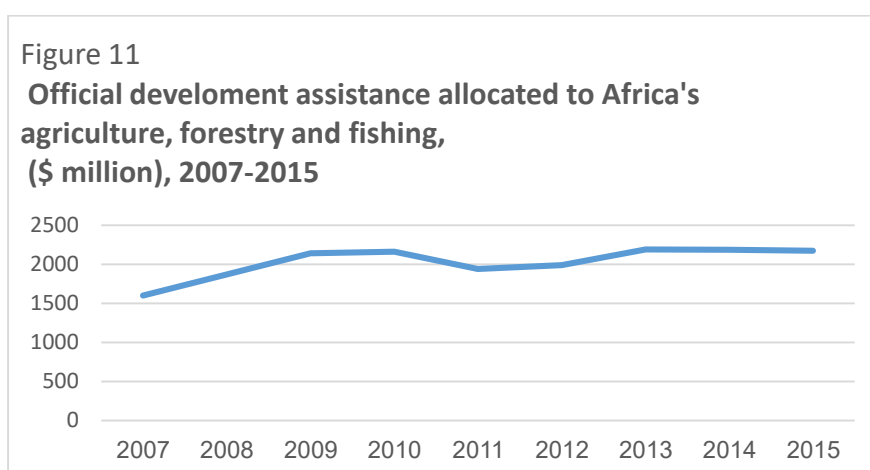


Source: FAOSTAT, Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), Rome.

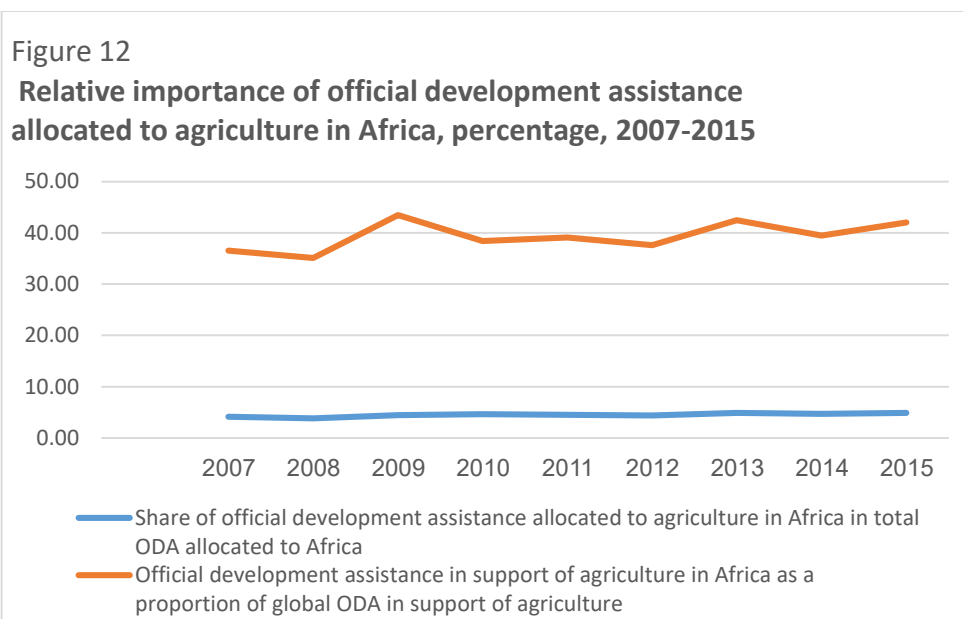


Note: Agriculture share of total government expenditures refers to the expenditure of central government only. Millennium Development Goals region definitions.

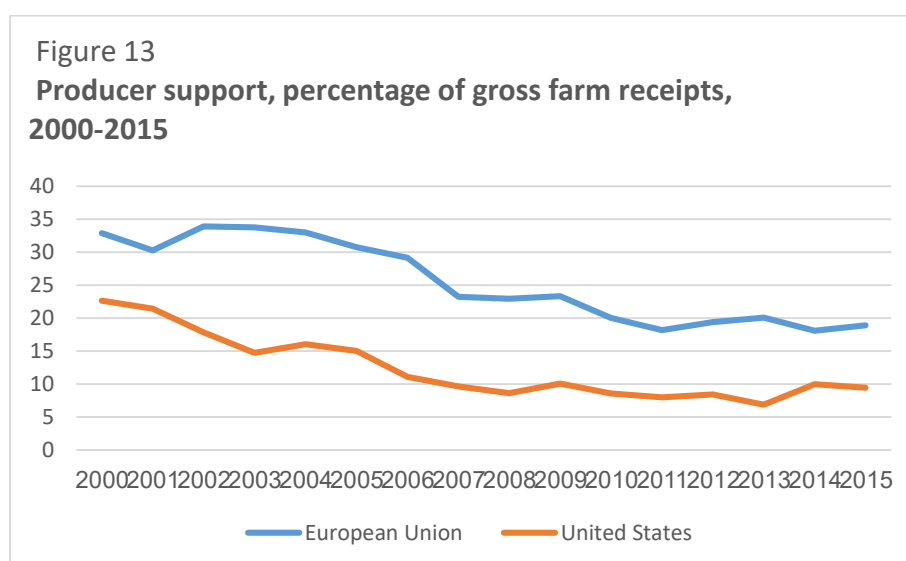
Source: Based on data from *FAOSTAT*, Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), Rome



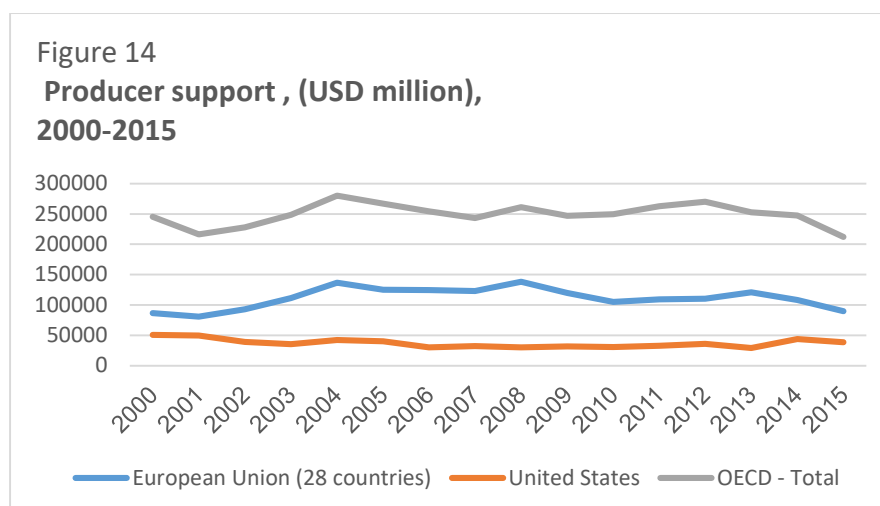
Source: OECD.Stat, Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), Paris, 2017.  
 Available at <http://stats.oecd.org/>.



Source: OECD.Stat, Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), Paris, 2017, available at <http://stats.oecd.org/>



Source: PSE/CSE database, Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), Paris, 2016.



Source: PSE/CSE database, Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), Paris, 2016

**Table 1**  
**African countries in which the Indicator of Food Price Anomalies (IFPA) registered high and moderately high cereal prices in 2016**

Reference area name	Disaggregation classification	Observation value <sup>2</sup>
Nigeria	Maize (white)	15.6
Swaziland	Maize meal	2.9
Mozambique	Maize (white)	1.8
Burundi	Maize	1.6
Rwanda	Maize	1.0
Uganda	Maize	0.9
Malawi	Maize	0.7
Nigeria	Rice (milled, local)	7.5
Angola	Rice (milled)	5.6
Mozambique	Rice	2.5
Swaziland	Rice	1.7
Morocco	Wheat (Soft)	2.3
Zimbabwe	Wheat (flour)	1.2
Namibia	Wheat (flour)	0.55
Nigeria	Sorghum (white)	8.42
South Sudan	Sorghum (Feterita)	6.24
Ethiopia	Sorghum (white)	1.05
Niger	Sorghum (local)	0.62
Nigeria	Millet	2.19
Niger	Millet (local)	0.62
Namibia	Millet	1.98

<sup>2</sup> Twelve- month average of monthly IFPA. **High** defined as  $IFPA \geq 1$ ; **Moderately high** defined as  $0.4 \leq IFPA < 0.99$ .

Source: Global Information and Early Warning System (GIEWS), Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), Rome.