

The State of Food Insecurity in the World 2015: mixed progress in the Pacific

By Camilla Burkot
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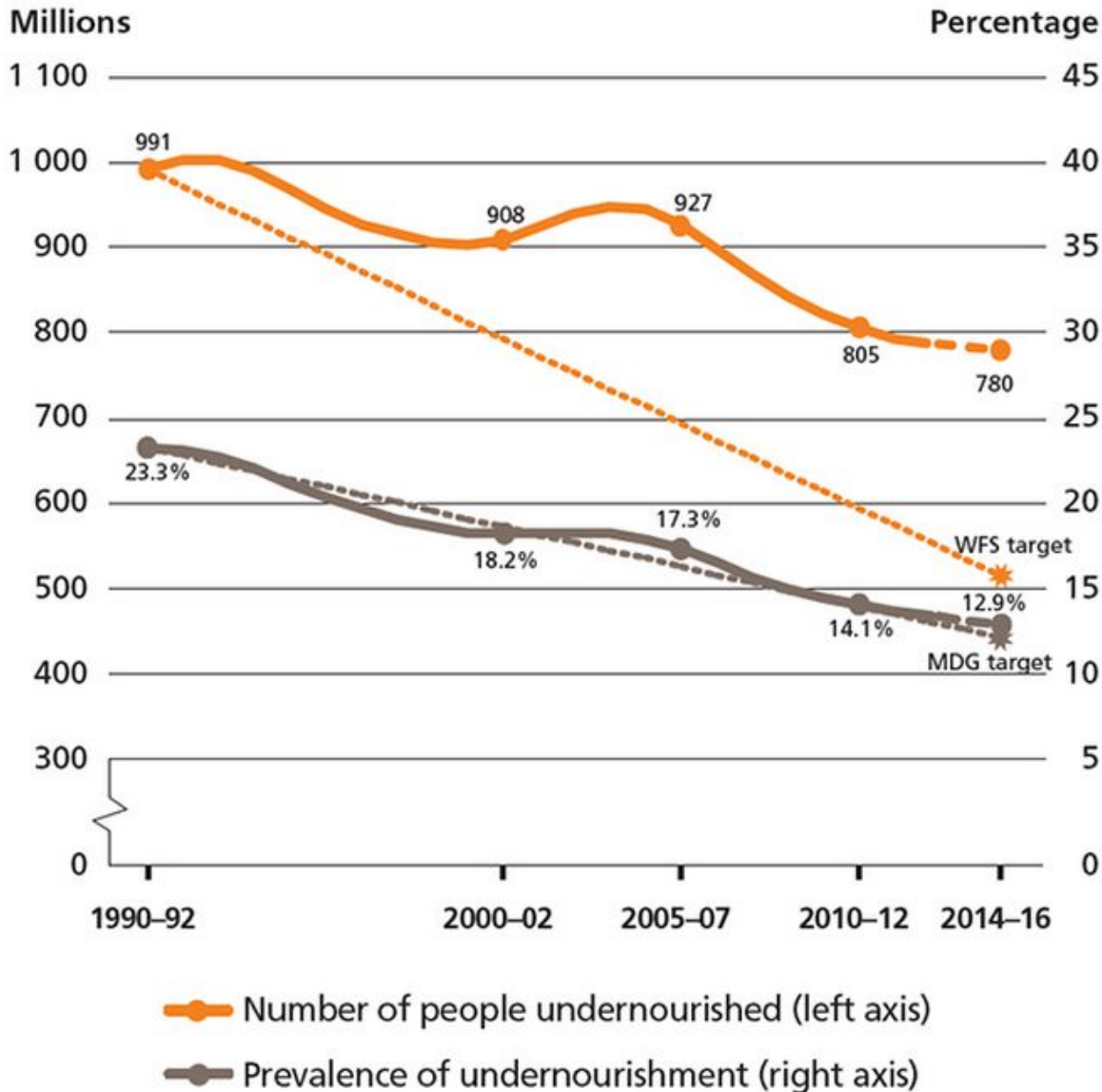
The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) recently released its [2015 State of Food Insecurity in the World](#) (SOFI) report, which takes stock of food insecurity and malnutrition at the global and regional levels.

Given the impending transition to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), this year's report focuses on the progress made towards achieving Millennium Development Goal 1: the eradication of extreme poverty and hunger.

The report finds that globally undernourishment has reduced significantly: some 216 million fewer people are undernourished by 2014-16 than were in 1990-92. This has brought the share of undernourished people in the world down from 23.3 per cent to 12.9 per cent - narrowly missing the MDG Target 1c of reducing the proportion of the world's hungry by 50 per cent.

Figure 1: Global progress toward MDG and WFS targets

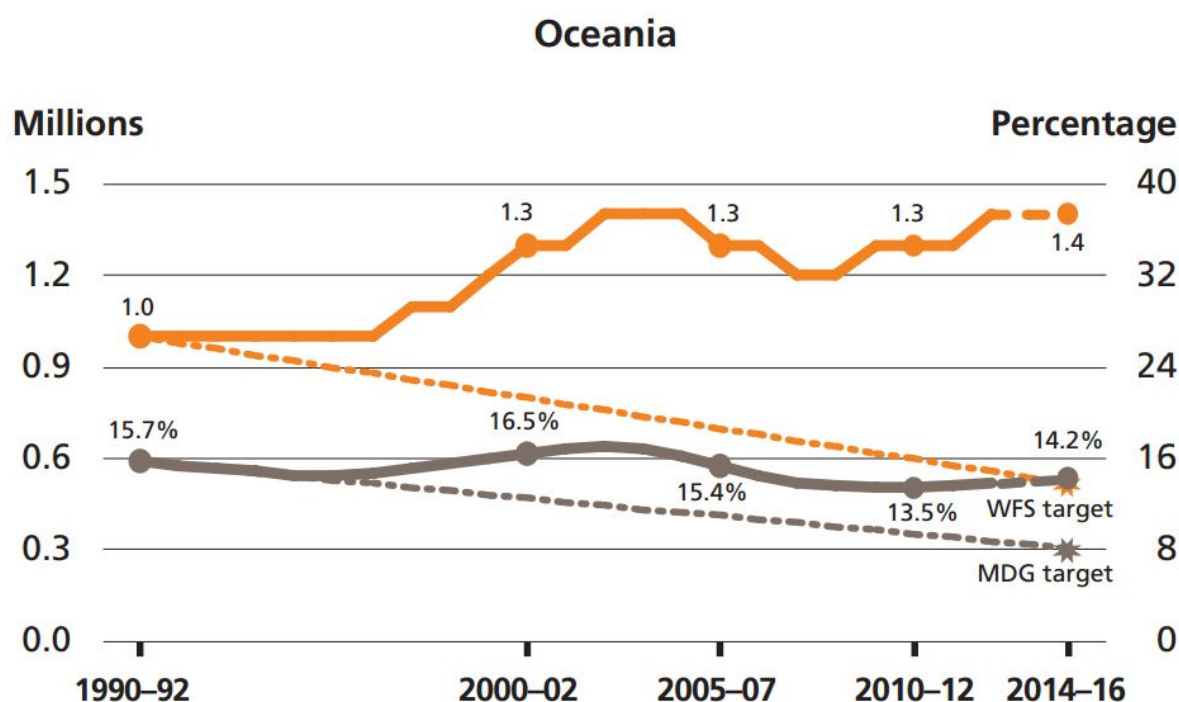
The trajectory of undernourishment in developing regions: actual and projected progress towards the MDG and WFS targets



Note: Data for 2014-16 refer to provisional estimates
Source: FAO

Beneath the global averages, the rate of progress has varied significantly at the regional level. Oceania is among those regions where progress has unfortunately been too slow to achieve the MDG 1c hunger target.

Figure 2: Progress in Oceania towards MDG and WFS targets



Compared with all other regions, Oceania saw the slowest improvement in the prevalence of undernourishment in children under five: just -0.4 per cent average annual change since 1990 (p. 20). As a consequence, Oceania recorded the second highest regional prevalence of undernourishment, 14.2 per cent, by the end of the MDG monitoring period (the highest was Africa, at 20 per cent; the global developing country average was 12.9 per cent).

Additionally, Oceania recorded a slight regression in the prevalence of child underweight over the same period, from 18.5 per cent in 1990-1992 to 18.9 per cent by 2014-16.

Unfortunately, the usefulness of these summary statistics are limited by the fact that sixteen Pacific island countries and territories – including the region’s most populous country, Papua New Guinea – did not report sufficient and/or reliable data to the FAO, and so are not included in the report.

Stepping away from statistics, the report outlines a number of barriers to food security and good nutrition in the Pacific. As well as low food availability and poor dietary diversity – which contribute to high rates of both under- and over-nutrition – poor access to safe drinking water and improved sanitation facilities are key factors impeding good nutrition (p. 25).

The report is not devoid of good news at the country level, though, highlighting that several Pacific island nations – Fiji, Kiribati, Samoa, and Solomon Islands – have achieved the MDG 1c target (p. 17).

About the author/s

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Camilla Burkot was a Research Officer at the Development Policy Centre, and Editor of the Devpolicy Blog, from 2015 to 2017. She has a background in social anthropology and holds a Master of Public Health from Columbia University, and has field experience in Eastern and Southern Africa, and PNG. She now works for the Burnet Institute.

Link: <https://devpolicy.org/the-state-of-food-insecurity-in-the-world-2015-mixed-progress-in-the-pacific-20150609/>

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