



UN: Hunger in Latin America and the Caribbean could rise to almost 67 million people by 2030

The State of Food Security and Nutrition warns that the region will fail the hunger target of the Sustainable Development Goals. Hunger has risen to 47.7 million people in 2019.

July 13th 2020, Santiago, Chile – Hunger in Latin America and the Caribbean increased to 47.7 million people in 2019, after five years of continuous rise, according to the new FAO report, *The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World (SOFI) 2020*.

SOFI is developed by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), the World Health Organization (WHO), the World Food Program (WFP), and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF).

The study warns that the region will not reach Sustainable Development Goal 2 of the 2030 Agenda –zero hunger– by 2030. SOFI projections indicate that hunger, considered as an estimate of the number of people who do not consume enough calories for an active and healthy life, will affect almost 67 million people in 2030, that is, about 20 million more than in 2019.

These projections do not consider the impact of COVID-19, so it is estimated that hunger will be even greater when the effects of the pandemic on food security are accounted for.

“We are far worse now than when the region committed to the Sustainable Development Goals in 2015. Hunger has increased by 9 million people since then”, said FAO’s Regional Representative, Julio Berdegué. Hunger now affects 7.4 percent of the population, and is expected to rise to 9.5 percent by 2030.

A 3-percentage point increase in hunger is projected for Central America by 2030, an additional 7.9 million people. In South America, hunger is projected to increase to 7.7 percent, equal to almost 36 million people. The Caribbean, while making progress, is also off track to achieve the hunger reduction target of the SDGs by 2030: the SOFI reports estimates that, by 2030, 6.6 million people will live with hunger in that area.

“The hunger figures in 2019 are chilling, as is the forecast for the year 2030. But with the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, the reality will be even worse than what we project in this study. We need an extraordinary response from governments, the private sector, civil society and multilateral organizations,” said Berdegué, urging countries and all sectors of society to implement large-scale measures to address rising hunger, food insecurity, poverty and malnutrition.

The prohibitive cost of a healthy diet

The SOFI also warns about the increase in obesity, which constitutes a serious health problem, since it increases the risk of non-communicable diseases, both in children and adults. 7.5 percent of children under 5 in the region are overweight, significantly higher than the world average of 5.6 percent.

A particularly worrying fact is that, among all the regions of the world, Latin America and the Caribbean has the highest cost for a diet that meets the minimum energy requirements: USD 1.06 per person per day. This is 34 percent more expensive than the global average.

In the region, the cost of a healthy diet (one that provides all the essential nutrients and energy that each person needs to stay healthy) is also the highest in the world, with an average value of USD 3.98 per day per person. This value is 3.3 times more expensive than what a person below the poverty line can spend on food. Based on estimated average incomes, more than 104 million people cannot afford a healthy diet.

Food insecurity affects one third or the population

Although Africa is where the highest levels of total food insecurity are observed, it is in Latin America and the Caribbean where food insecurity is rising the fastest: it increased from 22.9 percent in 2014 to 31.7 percent in 2019, due to a sharp rise in South America.

9 percent of the regional population suffers from severe food insecurity, which means that people have run out of food and, in the worst cases, go without food for a day or several days.

Likewise, almost a third of the region's inhabitants –205 million people–live in conditions of moderate food insecurity, which occurs when people face uncertainty in their ability to obtain food, or are forced to reduce the quantity or quality of the foods they consume.

Progress towards the nutrition targets of the Sustainable Development Goals

According to the SOFI report, Latin America and the Caribbean will be very close to achieving the child stunting reduction targets of the Sustainable Development Goals for 2030, missing it by only one year. However, it should be noted that in the region the prevalence of stunting of children living in the poorest households is about three times higher compared to those living in the richest households.

Latin America and the Caribbean is the only developing region with a prevalence of wasting (boys and girls who are underweight for their height) that is below the goals of the World Health Organization and the Sustainable Development Goals: 1.3 percent.

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