



# Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

## Ending Hunger: a priority for regional integration

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The consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic, the conflict in Ukraine, climate change, and the general economic slowdown have brought the fight against food insecurity to the forefront of global public debate. Latin America and the Caribbean is not on the sidelines of this situation.

Rising fertilizer and food prices, which are now above the levels of previous years, have inevitable effects on food security. If prices continue to increase, food production will also be affected, impacting the livelihoods of small-scale producers and family farmers.

Latin America and the Caribbean is a region of a permanent contradiction. It could produce food for more than 1.3 billion people, or twice its population, but its high levels of hunger, food insecurity, and malnutrition exceed world averages. In 2021, 40.6% of the regional population experienced moderate or severe food insecurity.

We are facing not only a food insecurity crisis, but also a complex global scenario in which national structures are unable to respond effectively because they are constantly affected by external factors.

Tangible solutions and response measures must be jointly implemented and designed with greater sustainability and resilience, considering that regional integration and cooperation processes are more necessary than ever.

In this regard, working together to transform agri-food systems to make them more efficient, inclusive, resilient, and sustainable is an opportunity to strengthen inter-sectoral and cross-cutting strategies; while reaffirming a regional political commitment to combat hunger and poverty.

At the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), we have strengthened our technical assistance to support regional coordination processes and governments in developing tools that contribute to reducing the impact of this situation.

During the last FAO Regional Conference, held in April 2022 in Quito, the Member States of the organization defined their priorities to address the challenges facing agri-food systems and avoid the effects that could be irreversible if we do not respond immediately.

Together with the Pro-Tempore Presidency of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC), currently held by the government of Argentina, we are working to identify alternatives to promote recovery that

recognize the contributions of the agri-food sector. We have expressed our willingness to provide technical assistance to strengthen and update the Food Security, Nutrition and Hunger Eradication Plan, Plan SAN-CELAC, which governments approved in 2015. In a challenging context, and with limited economic resources, preparing for a regional integration process on these issues requires recommendations and technical evidence for decision-making that will help to make public and private investments more efficient and improve people's food security and nutrition.

That is why, together with four United Nations agencies, we developed the Regional Food and Nutrition Security Outlook 2022, which includes an in-depth study on the relationships between diet quality, food security, and nutrition.

The cost of a healthy diet in our region is the highest in the world. If we do not address this as soon as possible, it will bring severe consequences for food insecurity, chronic malnutrition, overweight, and obesity. This will also impact the social and economic development of the region, limiting progress towards the fulfillment of the 2030 Agenda, and undermining the right to adequate food of millions of inhabitants in Latin America and the Caribbean.

During the last few years, which have been particularly difficult for the region, governments and other key actors have made important efforts and generated valuable experiences in the process of socio-economic recovery. FAO supports its Member Countries in developing the most appropriate mechanisms for designing and implementing policies that consider local realities, structural problems, and international conditions, while reducing the region's exposure to food insecurity and malnutrition.