

Side Event 8 – Food and Nutrition Security

Background/objective

The south of the Sahara made some progress towards halving the proportion of its population suffering from hunger (MDG 1.C target). Overall, the prevalence of hunger in the region declined by 31 percent between the base period (1990-92) and 2015, according to the latest estimates of the State of Food Insecurity in the World (SOFI 2015 report). In other words, approximately one person out of four in SSA is estimated to be undernourished today compared to a ratio of one out of three in 1990-92. This progress towards the MDG 1.C target has been made with substantial differences among the four sub-regions in the south of the Sahara. Progress has been recorded across the sub-regions with the exception of Middle Africa (Figure 1). Advancement has been particularly remarkable in Western Africa which successfully reduced by 63 percent the proportion of its people suffering from hunger; the proportion declined from 24.2 percent in 1990-92 to 9 percent in 2014-16.

Thus, the region continues to lag behind global and regional trends. The estimated total number of hungry people worldwide has declined by 218 million, from 1,011 million in 1990-92 to 792.5 million in 2014-16. Compared to other sub-regions, Western Africa has made significant progress, having reduced the number of undernourished people (WFS) by almost 13 million between 1990-92 and 2014-16 (Table 1), despite a significant population growth and recurrent droughts in Sahel countries. However, such progress is insufficient to reach the WFS target of halving the number of people undernourished by 2015. Since 1990-92, other sub-regions experienced an increase in the absolute number of undernourished people, approximately 20 percent and 2 percent respectively in Eastern and Southern Africa. Middle Africa has more than doubled its number of undernourished people over the same period, largely due to civil strife and insecurity. Much of Eastern Africa has also been affected by unfavourable climatic and drought conditions, particularly in the Horn of Africa. These factors seriously undermined progress toward improving food security and nutrition.

Governments in the South of the Sahara are under pressure to improve performance in the fight against food insecurity. While progress has been made towards achieving the WFS and the MDG targets, differences persist across sub-regions and individual countries. Countries which recorded success over the last two decades have been able to find effective ways for managing the complex processes involved in reducing the prevalence of undernourishment.

Background/objective

Although there is no set formula for achieving sustainable improvements in curbing undernourishment, tangible impact often requires transforming political commitments into:

- High-level leadership and improved governance;
- Public-private partnerships; and
- Comprehensive and complementary approaches to create an enabling environment.

Improving nutrition is achievable and evidence-based interventions exist. Reducing malnutrition requires nutrition policies, which then must translate into effective programs that address challenges at the household, community and national level.

Agriculture has a key role to play in improving the quality of diets and fighting all forms of malnutrition in Africa, and conversely, improving nutrition is a pre-requisite for achieving the targets for agricultural productivity and production and socio-economic development that African states have set.

It is also important to raise levels of nutrition and leverage opportunities offered by agriculture to enhance nutrition and health.

Target participants: All participants

Language: The Side Event will be interpreted in English and French.