

Latin America and the Caribbean today:



A snapshot of the nutrition situation



SAVING LIVES
CHANGING LIVES

LAC has the lowest prevalence of wasting in the world (1.3%). The region has and nearly halved the prevalence of stunting over the past 20 years (from 16.8% to 9%)¹. Nonetheless, notable challenges in the fight against hunger prevail. Between **2014 and 2018 hunger increased from 38 to 42.5 million**, and the number of **food-insecure people increased from 155 to 187 million**, disproportionately affecting women, the urban poor, rural communities, and marginalized groups, including indigenous, migrants and people living with HIV². The region has been off track to meet SDG 2.1 (to eradicate hunger and achieve food security) since 2015.

Poor diets and malnutrition continue to hamper human growth and development. However, the nature of these maladies has evolved over time.



The COVID-19 crisis has had an impact in every major component of food systems in Latin America and the Caribbean, most notably, the food supply chain, the food environment, and consumer behaviours. The long-lasting effects on social norms, gender dynamics, poverty, food security, and nutrition are already evident. The **prevalence of moderate to severe food insecurity grew by 9 percentage points**, more than in any other region. The prevalence of undernourishment – one that has historically decreased in the region- also increased by 2.5 percentage points³.

The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic has posed further challenges to the already pressing regional nutrition situation.



The sustained increase in the national rates of overweight and obesity is – even more so – reason for concern.



COVID-19 related illnesses and death is statically higher among people with obesity and other chronic non-communicable diseases. **60% of women and 58.8% of men in the region are overweight including 28% and 20% obese respectively, while 7.5% or 3.9 million children under the age of 5 years are overweight or obese⁴.** The consumption of ultra-processed foods in the region has grown in tandem with the obesity epidemic and is linked to unhealthy eating habits, which is one of the critical risk factors for chronic non-communicable diseases.



Dietary patterns are off track; the region only meets 1 of the recommendations for Healthy and Sustainable Diets⁵.

In 2019, FAO and WHO agreed on principles to determine what constitutes healthy and sustainable diets in contributing to the SDGs⁶. The EAT Lancet Commission also advocates for human and environmental health, and has established measuring parameters on Healthy Diets from sustainable food systems⁷. **Out of ten food categories, LAC is only within an acceptable range in one (fish consumption).** The only positive tendency in consumption patterns identified was an increase in fruit and vegetable consumption between 2008 and 2018 (+8%)⁸.

¹ FAO, IFAD, PAHO, WFP and UNICEF. 2021. Latin America and the Caribbean – Regional Overview of Food Security and Nutrition 2021: Statistics and trends. Santiago, FAO.

² FAO, OPS, WFP y UNICEF. Panorama de la Seguridad Alimentaria y Nutricional en América Latina y el Caribe 2019: hacia entornos alimentarios más saludables que hagan frente a todas las formas de malnutrición. Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, 2019.

³ FAO, IFAD, PAHO, WFP and UNICEF. 2021. Latin America and the Caribbean – Regional Overview of Food Security and Nutrition 2021: Statistics and trends. Santiago, FAO.

⁴ Joint Child Malnutrition Estimates. UNICEF, World Bank, WHO, <https://apps.who.int/gho/tableau-public/tpc-frame.jsp?id=402>.

⁵ 2021 Global Nutrition Report.

⁶ FAO and WHO. 2019. Sustainable healthy diets – Guiding principles. Rome.

⁷ Food in the Anthropocene: the EAT–Lancet Commission on healthy diets from sustainable food systems.

⁸ 2021 Global Nutrition Report.



Overview of WFP's role in supporting nutrition in LAC

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1

NUTRITION SYSTEMS INTEGRATION



WFP is the only UN agency providing **technical guidance for the implementation of nutrition sensitive interventions** within social protection frameworks in LAC.

Integrating actions for better programming: the case of the Dominican Republic



The government of the Dominican Republic, with the support from WFP, **cut anemia in half among vulnerable children**. Together, they integrated a nutrition component into a governmental social protection programme by making it nutrition sensitive. The programme, formerly known as Prosoli and now Superate, is a **conditional cash transfer social protection programme** managed by the Cabinet for Social Policy designed to help Dominicans living in poverty. The nutrition component developed and implemented includes:

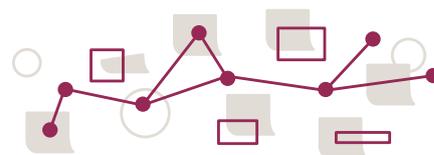
- Capacity development
- Growth monitoring
- Nutrition education
- Distribution of micronutrient powders to young children

The needs for this programme were, in part, informed by the results obtained through the **Cost of Hunger Study** and its revision was prompted by its external evaluation and results from the FNG.

WFP's innovative vision for initiating nutrition-sensitive programming in the Dominican Republic, led to a prosperous collaboration with the National Government, resulting in a **50% in the prevalence of anemia among vulnerable children**. In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, an innovative approach for food distribution through civil society organizations ensured that **over 105,000 nutritionally vulnerable people** received fortified complementary foods and micronutrient powders, among other successful collaborations.

2

EVIDENCE GENERATION FOR INFORMED DECISION MAKING



Double Burden of Malnutrition

"The social and economic impact of the double burden of malnutrition in Latin America and the Caribbean" was formulated within an interinstitutional memorandum of understanding with the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC). Documenting the social consequences and estimating the **economic costs generated by the double burden** is extremely important for decision-making regarding policies, strategies and programs that direct public investment towards the prevention of malnutrition in all its forms. **Analyses have been done in 9 countries** (Chile, Ecuador, Mexico, El Salvador, Honduras, Dominican Republic, Guatemala, Peru and Bolivia). They show countries lose between 2.2 and 16.3% of their GDP annually due to malnutrition that results in productivity loss, increased mortality rates and burdens to health and food systems.

Covid and Nutrition

A series of nutrition and food security surveys were developed by WFP in collaboration with the Mexican Institute of Public Health (INSP) in response to the **need for a timely assessment of changes in food security, diet, and lifestyles** produced because of the COVID-19 crisis in Colombia, Ecuador, and Honduras. Based on the results of the surveys, statistical analysis boards and specific reports have been generated for each country that suggest **changes in dietary patterns that have persisted even after Covid**. These reports provide **recommendations for public policy and changes in programming**.

Fill the Nutrient Gap (FNG)

The FNG analysis is a corporate tool that seeks to strengthen evidence, build consensus, and improve decision-making to **make a healthy diet affordable for everyone**. The methodology has been implemented in 50 countries worldwide, including **4 countries in LAC** (Guatemala, El Salvador, Dominican Republic, Ecuador). In the region, the methodology has supported the redesign of government social protection policies to make them more nutrition sensitive.

Putting results to work: the case of Ecuador



WFP/Giulio d'Adamo

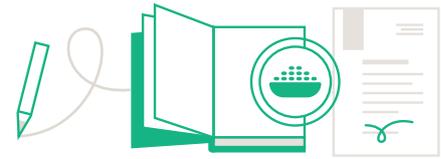
Ecuador has **implemented all 3 tools described above**, concluding that there were numerous reasons for concern: 1 out of every 4 children <5 years of age suffered chronic undernutrition and close to 60% of adults suffered overweight or obesity; less than 50% of homes had to access to a healthy diet, especially amongst those in rural areas with already poor feeding practices in place. Hence, in the context of the pandemic, using the multiple sources of existing and timely evidence generated, a **social protection response was put in place** to face current challenges and mitigate future impact. As a result:

- Multisectoral and **coordinated actions** were implemented between the Education and Agriculture ministries.
- A dedicated effort was pursued to **target vulnerable households and improve their economic access** to nutritious diets.
- An **SBCC strategy** was also implemented to reduce cultural barriers and social paradigms.

All prior actions were implemented through a **life cycle approach**, and many with the direct support of WFP.

3

PARTNERING FOR RESULTS



Emergency Preparedness

LAC is the second most disaster-prone region in the world⁹. As part of a joint commitment to prepare agencies and technical personnel in the event of emergencies, trainings such as the Webinar “Key Actions for Nutrition in Emergency Preparedness and Response” was jointly organized by UNICEF and WFP in **anticipation of the 2021 hurricane season in the region**. The session was devoted to an in-depth discussion of key actions necessary to ensure adequate nutrition for affected households, with a focus on the most vulnerable populations.

Food Fortification

In collaboration with DSM Nutritional Products, WFP has implemented a comprehensive **strategy to scale up fortification efforts** in Latin America and the Caribbean. At present, efforts are carried out in the Dominican Republic, Peru, and most recently, Colombia. Since 2015, WFP has provided technical support for the consolidation of the rice fortification policy in Peru. WFP is the **only UN agency that fosters rice fortification** and has become a specialized technical partner of choice to the government. Due in part to these efforts, Peru approved a National Rice Fortification Law in 2020.

Nudging for policy making:
the case of Peru

Nudge/nəj/: touch or push (something) gently or gradually



WFP/Guillermo Galdos

The WFP Regional Bureau, alongside DSM Nutritional Products and WFP Headquarters, has been engaged in the promotion of **Rice Fortification in LAC**. LAC is a rice consuming region, only second to Asia, and countries such as the Dominican Republic and Peru average a per capita consumption of rice of 150g daily¹⁰.

In both countries, WFP has supported the process of including rice fortification in the most strategic social protection programmes, such as the National School Feeding Programme **Qali Warma (Peru)** and actively incorporated within the programmes of the National Institute of Comprehensive Care for Early Childhood (**INAPI**) and the National Institute of Student Welfare (**INABIE**) benefiting about **3 million children as a result**.

Recently both countries passed **legislation** to mandate rice fortification, Peru in the form of a National Rice Fortification Law and the Dominican Republic as a Ministerial Resolution.

⁹ OCHA 2020.

¹⁰ Scaling Up Rice Fortification in Latin America and the Caribbean. Special Supplement, Sight and Life Magazine, 2016.

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