



State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World (SOFI) 2023

For Prelims: [United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization \(FAO\)](#), [BRICS nations](#), [PPP dollars](#), [Global Food Security Index 2022](#), [Human Development Report 2021-22](#), [Global Multidimensional Poverty Index MPI 2022](#), Global Food Security Index 2022, National Food Security Act (NFSA) 2013, Minimum Support Prices, Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY), National Horticulture Mission, National Food Processing Mission

For Mains: Food Security & National Security, Food Security and related Issues.

Source: [TH](#)

Why in News?

'State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World' (SOFI) 2023, a report by the [United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization \(FAO\)](#), has shed light on a concerning issue in India.

- It highlights the growing disparity between the cost of a nutritious meal and the economic realities faced by a significant portion of the Indian population.

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Not enough on the plate

The data for the charts were sourced from a blog published by the World Bank titled, 'Over 3.1 billion people could not afford a healthy diet in 2021, an increase of 134 million since the start of COVID-19,' and the 'State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World (SOFI) 2023'

Chart 1: The chart shows the cost of a healthy diet in terms of PPP dollars per person per day in 2021, the latest year with comparable data

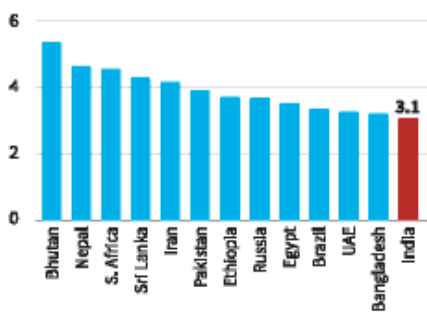


Chart 2: The chart shows the share of the population that is unable to afford a healthy diet in 2021. For instance, in India, 74% were not able to afford a healthy diet

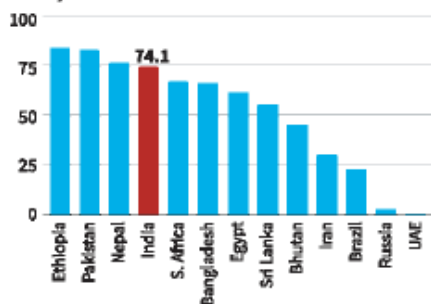


Chart 3: The chart shows the change (in %) in the cost of a healthy diet over the years across regions

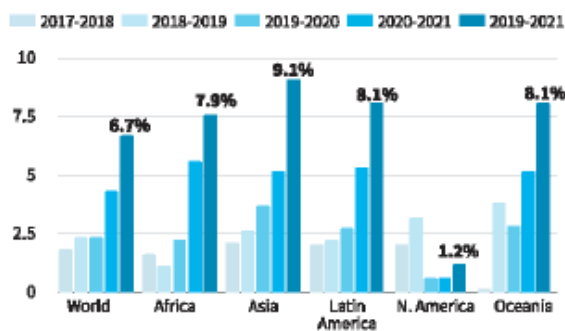
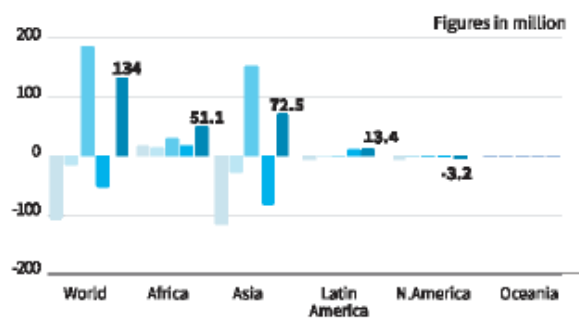


Chart 4: The chart shows the change in the number of people (in million) who were unable to afford a healthy diet over the years across regions



What are the Key Highlights of the Report?

- **Global Hunger:** While global hunger numbers have remained stagnant between 2021 and 2022, the number of people facing hunger worldwide **has increased by over 122 million since 2019 due to the pandemic**, repeated weather shocks, and conflicts, including the war in Ukraine.
- **Nutritional Access:** Approximately 2.4 billion individuals, largely women, and residents of rural areas, did not have consistent access to nutritious, safe, and sufficient food in 2022.
- **Child Malnutrition:** Child malnutrition is still alarmingly high. In 2021, 22.3% (148.1 million) children were stunted, 6.8% (45 million) were wasted, and 5.6% (37 million) were overweight.
- **Urbanization's Impact on Diet:** As urbanization accelerates, there is a **noticeable increase in the consumption of processed and convenience foods**, leading to a spike in overweight and obesity rates across urban, peri-urban, and rural areas.
- **Rural Dependence on Global Markets:** Previously self-sustaining rural regions, especially in Africa and Asia, are now found to be increasingly dependent on national and global food markets.
- **Regional Trends:** The SOFI report also tracks changes in the cost of a healthy diet and affordability across regions.
 - Between 2019 and 2021, Asia witnessed the highest increase in the cost of maintaining a healthy diet, **rising by almost 9%.**
 - The growth in the number of people unable to afford a nutritious diet was highest in Asia and Africa, with South Asia and Eastern and Western Africa facing the greatest challenges.
- **South Asia's Struggle:** South Asia, with 1.4 billion people, recorded the highest number (72%) of individuals unable to afford a healthy diet.
- **Africa's Challenge:** In Africa, Eastern and Western Africa were particularly affected, with 85% of the population unable to afford a healthy diet. These two continents (Asia and Africa) accounted for 92% of the global increase in this statistic, underscoring the severity of the issue on the African continent.
- **Future Outlook:** By 2050, it's projected that 70% of the global population will reside in cities. This

significant demographic shift necessitates a reorientation of food systems to cater to these new urban populations and eradicate hunger, food insecurity, and malnutrition.

What are the Key Highlights related to the Report on India?

- **Cost of a Healthy Diet in India:** According to the SOFI report, India has the lowest cost of a healthy diet among [BRICS nations](#) and its neighbours. In 2021, a healthy diet in India costs approximately 3.066 [Purchasing Power Parity \(PPP\)](#) per person per day, making it seemingly affordable on the surface.
 - A diet is considered unaffordable if it costs more than 52% of a nation's average income. India has a low average income compared to other countries.
 - This makes it difficult for a substantial portion of the population to afford the recommended diet.
- **The Mumbai Case Study:** The report also highlights a specific case study in Mumbai, where the **cost of meals has risen by a staggering 65% in just five years**. In contrast, salaries and wages have only increased by 28%-37% during the same period.
 - Mumbai, chosen for its consistent data availability, serves as a stark example of the challenges faced by urban populations in India.
- **Global Comparisons:** Comparing India to other countries in the report, it becomes evident that while the cost of a healthy diet in India remains relatively low, it remains unattainable for a substantial portion of the population due to income disparities.
 - **In 2021, 74% of Indians could not afford a healthy diet, ranking India fourth among the nations considered.**

Why is Ensuring Food Security Important for India?

- **Meeting the Nutritional Needs of the Population:**
 - **India is home to a significant population that is malnourished or undernourished**, which affects their physical and mental growth.
 - According to the [Global Food Security Index 2022](#), **India has a prevalence of undernutrition of 16.3%**. Further, **30.9% of children in India are stunted, 33.4% are underweight**, and 3.8% are obese.
- **Supporting Economic Growth:**
 - **Agriculture is a crucial sector that contributes significantly** to India's economy. By ensuring food security, the government can support farmers and increase their income, which can help drive economic growth.
 - With over **70% of the population engaged in agriculture-related activities**, it is the backbone of India's economy.
- **Reducing Poverty:**
 - **Food security can play a vital role in reducing poverty levels**. By providing access to affordable and nutritious food, people can better manage their expenses, reduce their healthcare costs, and improve their overall quality of life.
 - According to the [Global Multidimensional Poverty Index MPI 2023](#), India still has more than 230 million people who are poor.
- **Ensuring National Security:**
 - **Food security is also essential for India's national security**. A stable food supply can prevent social unrest and political instability, which can threaten national security.
- **Combating Climate Change:**
 - Climate change poses a significant threat to India's food security. By adopting sustainable farming practices and investing in climate-resilient crops, **India can better adapt to the changing climate and ensure food security** for its population.
 - The International Food Security Assessment for 2022-2032 indicates that **India's large population has a significant impact on food insecurity trends**. It is projected that around 333.5 million people will be affected in India during 2022-23.

What are the Related Initiatives Taken?

- [National Food Security Act \(NFSA\) 2013](#)

- [National Food Security Mission](#)
- [National Agriculture Market \(e-NAM\) Platform](#)
- [National Food Processing Mission](#)
- **Other Policies:**
 - [Minimum Support Prices \(MSP\) for Agricultural products](#)
 - [Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana \(PMFBY\)](#)
 - [National Horticulture Mission](#)

What are the Challenges of Food Security in India?

- **Inadequate Infrastructure:**
 - Inadequate infrastructure makes it difficult for farmers to transport their produce to the market and store them properly. This leads to high wastage and lower profits for farmers.
- **Poor Agricultural Practices:**
 - Poor agricultural practices like **over-cultivation, excessive use of pesticides, and improper irrigation techniques** have led to **decreased soil fertility** and reduced crop yields.
- **Extreme Weather Conditions:**
 - The **extreme weather conditions due to climate change** have also caused **crop failures and food shortages**. **Floods, droughts, and heatwaves** are becoming more frequent and intense, which affects food production and increases food prices.
- **Inefficient Supply Chain Networks:**
 - **Inefficient supply chain networks, including inadequate transportation, storage, and distribution facilities, also contribute** to food insecurity in India. This leads to higher prices for consumers and lower profits for farmers.
- **Fragmented Landholdings:**
 - **Fragmented landholdings, where farmers own small and scattered plots of land, make it difficult to adopt modern farming practices** and technologies. This, in turn, affects food production and availability.

Way Forward

- **Investing in Agriculture Production Systems and Research:**
 - The government **should invest in modern agricultural research** to increase agricultural production.
- **Improving Storage Facilities and Transportation Networks:**
 - The government **should develop adequate storage facilities to prevent post-harvest losses** and robust **transportation networks for distributing food products across the country** to ensure supply-demand balance.
- **Promoting Public-Private Partnerships:**
 - The government **should promote partnerships between the public and private sectors** to improve agricultural productivity and food availability.
- **Encouraging Sustainable Agriculture Practices:**
 - The government **should promote sustainable agriculture practices that preserve soil health and reduce the use of harmful pesticides** and fertilizers.

UPSC Civil Services Examination Previous Year Question (PYQ)

Prelims

Q. As regards the use of international food safety standards as reference point for the dispute settlements, which one of the following does WTO collaborate with? (2010)

- (a) Codex Alimentarius Commission
- (b) International Federation of Standards Users
- (c) International Organization for Standardization

(d) World Standards Cooperation

Ans: (a)

- The Codex Alimentarius, or “Food Code“ is a collection of standards, guidelines and codes of practice adopted by the Codex Alimentarius Commission.
- The Commission is the central part of the Joint FAO/WHO Food Standards Programme and was established by FAO and WHO to protect consumer health and promote fair practices in food trade.

Q.2 The FAO accords the status of ‘Globally Important Agricultural Heritage System (GIAHS)’ to traditional agricultural systems. What is the overall goal of this initiative? (2016)

1. To provide modern technology, training in modern farming methods and financial support to local communities of identified GIAHS so as to greatly enhance their agricultural productivity.
2. To identify and safeguard eco-friendly traditional farm practices and their associated landscapes, agricultural biodiversity and knowledge systems of the local communities.
3. To provide Geographical Indication status to all the varieties of agricultural produce in such identified GIAHS.

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

- (a)** 1 and 3 only
(b) 2 only
(c) 2 and 3 only
(d) 1, 2 and 3

Ans: (b)

Mains

Q. How far do you agree with the view that the focus on lack of availability of food as the main cause of hunger takes the attention away from ineffective human development policies in India? **(2018)**