

Highlights

The State of Food and Agriculture Social protection and agriculture: breaking the cycle Of rural poverty 2015

**FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION OF THE UNITED
NATIONS (FAO)
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A majority – 72 out of 129 – of the countries monitored by FAO have achieved the Millennium Development Goal target of halving the prevalence of undernourishment by 2015, with developing regions as a whole missing the target by a small margin. In addition, 29 countries have met the more ambitious goal laid out at the World Food Summit in 1996, when governments committed to halving the absolute number of undernourished people by 2015. Meanwhile the share of people in developing countries living in extreme poverty has fallen from 43 percent in 1990 to 17 percent this year (World Bank, 2015a). Providing social protection and pursuing agricultural development in an integrated way offers synergies that can increase the effectiveness of both.

- Many developing countries increasingly recognize that social protection measures are needed to relieve the immediate deprivation of people living in poverty and to prevent others from falling into poverty when a crisis strikes.*
- In most low- and middle-income countries, agriculture remains the largest employer of the poor.*
- It is a major source of livelihoods through wage labour and own production for household consumption and the market.*
- Poverty and its corollaries – malnutrition, illness and lack of education – limit agricultural productivity. Hence, providing social protection and pursuing agricultural development in an integrated way offers synergies that can increase the effectiveness of both.*

Trends in poverty:

Extreme poverty has fallen substantially in many regions, especially in East Asia and the Pacific as well as in South Asia. In sub-Saharan Africa, little progress has been made and almost half the population is extremely poor.

Why is poverty so persistent?

Poverty often begins with poor nutrition and health, especially in early childhood: the poor become trapped in vicious circles of hunger, poor nutrition, ill health, low productivity and poverty. Economic growth, especially agricultural development, has been essential for driving down poverty rates.

What is social protection?

Social protection encompasses initiatives that provide cash or in-kind transfers to the poor, protect the vulnerable against risks and enhance the social status and rights of the marginalized – all with the overall goal of reducing poverty and economic and social vulnerability.

Social protection includes three broad components:

- *social assistance,*
- *social insurance and*
- *labour market protection.*

Social protection can help reduce poverty and food insecurity

Social protection programmes are effective in reducing poverty and hunger. In 2013, social protection helped lift up to 150 million people out of extreme poverty, that is, those living on less than \$1.25 a day.

Key messages of the report

- Social protection programmes reduce poverty and food insecurity.
- Programmes targeted at women have Stronger food security and nutrition impacts.
- Social protection stimulates investment in agricultural production and other economic activities.
- Social protection does not reduce work effort. But it does give beneficiaries greater choice, and many shift time.
- Social protection has virtuous impacts on local communities and economies.
- Social protection, by itself, is not enough to move people out of poverty.
- There are clear opportunities to leverage social protection and agriculture programmes to further rural development.
- A national vision is needed of how agriculture and social protection can gradually move people out of poverty and hunger

Read the full report at the official website:

<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0022/002269/226982e.pdf>