

GAO
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Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-08-680](#), a report to congressional requesters

Why GAO Did This Study

In 1996, the United States and more than 180 world leaders pledged to halve the number of undernourished people globally by 2015 from the 1990 level. The global number has not decreased significantly—remaining at about 850 million in 2001-2003—and the number in sub-Saharan Africa has increased from about 170 million in 1990-1992 to over 200 million in 2001-2003. On the basis of analyses of U.S. and international agency documents, structured panel discussions with experts and practitioners, and fieldwork in four African countries, GAO was asked to examine (1) factors that contribute to persistent food insecurity in sub-Saharan Africa and (2) the extent to which host governments and donors, including the United States, are working toward halving hunger in the region by 2015.

What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that the Administrator of USAID, in collaboration with the Secretaries of Agriculture, State, and the Treasury, (1) develop an integrated governmentwide U.S. strategy that defines actions and resources, enhances collaboration with host governments and donors, and improves measures to monitor progress and (2) report annually to Congress on the implementation of the first recommendation. USAID concurred with the first recommendation but expressed concerns about the vehicle of the annual reporting. The Departments of Agriculture and the Treasury generally concurred with the findings, while State identified additional issues for consideration.

To view the full product, including the scope and methodology, click on [GAO-08-680](#). For more information, contact Thomas Melito at (202) 512-9601 or melitot@gao.gov.

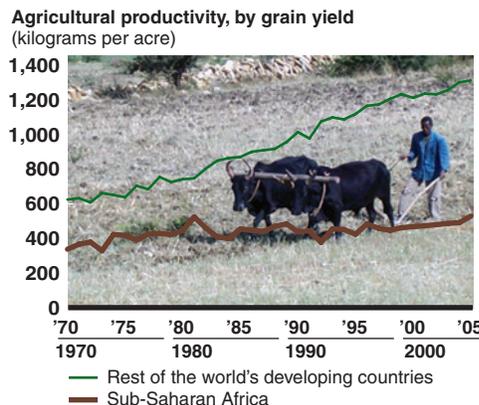
INTERNATIONAL FOOD SECURITY

Insufficient Efforts by Host Governments and Donors Threaten Progress to Halve Hunger in Sub-Saharan Africa by 2015

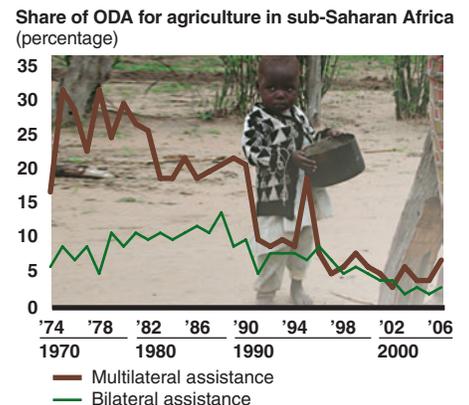
What GAO Found

Chronic undernourishment (food insecurity) in sub-Saharan Africa persists primarily due to low agricultural productivity, limited rural development, government policy disincentives, and the impact of poor health on the agricultural workforce. Additional factors, including rising global commodity prices and climate change, will likely further exacerbate food insecurity in the region. Agricultural productivity in sub-Saharan Africa, as measured by grain yield, is only about 40 percent of that of the rest of the world's developing countries, and the gap has widened over the years (see left figure). Low agricultural productivity in sub-Saharan Africa is due, in part, to the limited use of agricultural inputs, such as fertilizer and improved seed varieties, and the lack of modern farming practices.

Sub-Saharan Africa Has Lagged behind the Rest of the World's Developing Countries in Agricultural Productivity



Share of Official Development Assistance (ODA) of Agriculture for Sub-Saharan Africa Has Declined



Source: GAO analysis of Food and Agriculture Organization and Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development data.

The efforts of host governments and donors, including the United States, to achieve the goal of halving hunger in sub-Saharan Africa by 2015 have thus far been insufficient. First, some host governments have not prioritized food security as a development goal, and, according to a 2008 report of the International Food Policy Research Institute, as of 2005, only a few countries had fulfilled a 2003 pledge to direct 10 percent of government spending to agriculture. Second, donors have reduced the priority given to agriculture (see right figure), and their efforts have been further hampered by difficulties in coordination and deficiencies in measuring and monitoring progress. Third, limited agricultural development resources and a fragmented approach have impaired U.S. efforts to reduce hunger in Africa. The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) funding to address food insecurity in Africa has been primarily for emergency food aid, which has been crucial in helping to alleviate food crises but has not addressed the underlying factors that contributed to the recurrence and severity of these crises. Also, the United States' principal strategy for meeting its commitment to halve hunger in Africa is limited to some of USAID's agricultural development activities and does not integrate other U.S. agencies' agricultural development assistance to the region.