Zero Hunger by 2030: UN Report

GS-Paper-3 Economic development (PT-MIANS)

According to a study titled State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World, hunger and malnutrition is increasing around the world. In this scenario, achieving the Sustainable Development Goal (2) of ‘Zero Hunger’ by 2030 will be very difficult.

The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World is the most authoritative global study tracking progress towards ending hunger and malnutrition.

**It is produced jointly by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations, the International Fund for Agriculture (IFAD), the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), the UN World Food Programme (WFP) and the World Health Organization (WHO).

Imp Points

Increasing Hunger:

Steep Rise: The study estimates that almost 690 million people went hungry in 2019 – up by 10 million from 2018, and by nearly 60 million in five years (2014-2019).

Hunger is an uncomfortable or painful physical sensation caused by insufficient consumption of dietary energy. For decades, FAO has used the prevalence of undernourishment indicator to estimate the extent of hunger in the world, thus “hunger” may also be referred to as undernourishment.

Chronic Hunger: There has been no change in the hunger trend since 2000. After steadily diminishing for decades, chronic hunger slowly began to rise in 2014 and continues to do so.

Regional Hotspots: Asia remains home to the greatest number of hunger (381 million). Africa is second (250 million), followed by Latin America and the Caribbean (combined 48 million).

Rate of Hunger: The rate of undernourishment (hunger) in Africa is double compared to Asia and it is expected that by 2030, Africa will be home to more than half of the world’s chronically hungry.

Reasons: High costs and low affordability was the main reason behind the hunger.

Increasing Malnutrition:

Affordability: The study estimates that 3 billion people or more cannot afford a healthy diet.

In sub-Saharan Africa and southern Asia, this is the case for 57% of the population.

The key reason behind malnutrition is the high cost of nutritious foods and the low affordability of healthy diets for vast numbers of families.

According to the study, a healthy diet costs far more than USD 1.90/day, which is the international poverty threshold.

It puts the price of even the least expensive healthy diet at five times the price of filling stomachs with starch only.

Impact on Children: According to the study, in 2019, nearly a third of children under five (191 million) were stunted (too short) or wasted (too thin). Another 38 million under-fives were overweight.

Suggestions

Shifting of Diet: A global switch to healthy diets would help check the backslide into hunger while delivering enormous savings. Shift to a healthy diet will reduce the health costs associated with unhealthy diets. The diet related social cost of greenhouse gas emissions, estimated at USD 1.7 trillion, could also be cut by up to three-quarters by 2030.

Transform Food Systems: The transformation of food systems will not only reduce the cost of nutritious foods but also increase the affordability of healthy diets.

The study calls on governments:

- To mainstream nutrition in their approaches to agriculture.
- Work to cut cost-escalating factors in the production, storage, transport, distribution and marketing of food – including by reducing inefficiencies and food loss and waste.
- Support local small-scale producers to grow and sell more nutritious
foods and secure their access to markets.
- Prioritize children’s nutrition as the category in greatest need.
- Foster behaviour change through education and communication;
- Embed nutrition in national social protection systems and investment strategies.

Way Forward

This study is the reminder that such a huge percentage of humanity is still going hungry and should be a wake up call for the government in particular and society in general. Innovative strategies such as shifting towards Smart Food is the need of the hour, which is highly nutritious and will certainly help to reduce hunger.