



# SDG 2: Progress, gaps and recommendations for the UK

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**RESULTS**

**SDG 2 commits to 'end hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition, and promote sustainable agriculture'. This recognises the links between supporting sustainable agriculture, tackling malnutrition, empowering smallholder farmers, promoting gender equality, ending rural poverty, ensuring healthy lifestyles, tackling climate change and other issues addressed across the SDGs.**

The Covid-19 pandemic has significantly affected the world's progress against tackling hunger and malnutrition. Globally, between 720 and 811 million people faced hunger in 2020 – around 118 million more people than in 2019.<sup>46</sup> Close to 193 million people were acutely food insecure in 2021, a 40 million increase since 2020, and this is likely to get worse with the Ukraine conflict.<sup>47</sup> The Global Nutrition Report 2021 highlights the rise of malnutrition-related diseases: 149.2 million children under 5 years of age are stunted, 45.4 million are wasted, and 38.9 million are overweight.<sup>48</sup> In addition, 20.5 million babies (14.6% of all live births) have a low birth weight and 570.8 million girls and women of reproductive age (15–49 years) are anaemic.

Tackling hunger and malnutrition together is essential to end preventable deaths, avoid ill-health and maximise economic opportunities for all. Promoting good nutrition enhances productivity and economic outcomes, which are fundamental to accelerating poverty reduction and tackling inequalities. Although closely related, hunger and malnutrition are

46. FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP and WHO (2021), [The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2021](#)

47. Global Network Against Food Crises (2022), [Global Report on Food Crises](#)

48. Development Initiatives Poverty Research (2021), [Global Nutrition Report 2021](#)

different. Hunger is a physical condition, which results from insufficient intake of food, while malnutrition happens over a period of time due to inadequate or excess food intake or utilisation of nutrients. Hunger and malnutrition are complex and multi-sectoral issues that can only be addressed by tackling both their direct and underlying causes. Without addressing these underlying factors, improvements are unlikely to be significant or sustainable.

## Target 2.1:

**By 2030, end hunger and ensure access by all people, in particular the poor and people in vulnerable situations, including infants, to safe, nutritious and sufficient food all year round**

Up to 20 million people in the Horn of Africa region currently face acute food insecurity, with thousands on the brink of famine (as of 2022)<sup>49</sup>. Climate change and conflict are driving significant increases in global hunger. In May 2021, the UK led the establishment of the G7 Famine Prevention and Humanitarian Crises Compact. This commits to allocate \$7 billion for famine prevention and response in 42 countries facing acute food insecurity, including the 3 countries that were at immediate risk of famine in early 2021 (Yemen, South Sudan, and Nigeria). The compact helped to draw international attention to worsening acute food insecurity in many parts of the world and aimed to tackle the issue, while also strengthening the resilience of people most vulnerable to acute food insecurity in the future. However, despite promising language, the compact lacked specific and transparent targets. There was no breakdown of the \$7

49. World Food Programme (19 April 2022), [No rain and no resources: millions of families across the horn of Africa pushed closer to catastrophe each day](#), [news article accessed June 2022]



billion by donor or by type of official development assistance (ODA), and it is likely that this was not new funding but existing humanitarian ODA already committed. Despite the call for implementation plans, these were not forthcoming. This has made it difficult for civil society to hold G7 countries accountable to their commitments.

Since then, food security has continued to deteriorate, including in the Horn of Africa, which is suffering its worst drought in 40 years, and where opportunities for pre-emptive action have now been missed. More must be done to shift the international response to act earlier and build better resilience, which not only saves lives but reduces the overall cost of the humanitarian response. With the Ukraine conflict impacting food prices and the availability of essential foods, fertilisers and fuel, global food insecurity is likely to worsen.

### Target 2.2:

**By 2030, end all forms of malnutrition, including achieving, by 2025, the internationally agreed targets on stunting and wasting in children under five years of age, and address the needs of adolescent girls, pregnant and lactating women, and older persons.**

The first Nutrition for Growth (N4G) Summit was hosted by the UK government in 2013, mobilising around £17 billion to combat malnutrition, of which the UK contributed £1.25 billion in new investments. However, the UK's commitment to nutrition expired in 2020, and was not renewed until February 2022. This created a gap in UK nutrition funding in 2021. At N4G, the UK government committed to adopt the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) nutrition policy marker. In February 2022, the UK announced a belated financial commitment of £1.5 billion for nutrition between 2022 and 2030.

The adoption of the OECD policy marker for nutrition, and its current integration into FCDO programmes from planning stages, will increase the effectiveness of existing nutrition programmes. It will also enhance new development programmes where improving nutrition is a stated objective. While a financial commitment to nutrition is welcome, £1.5 billion is a significant reduction in funding for nutrition programmes, compared with previous commitments and with what the FCDO spent on nutrition between 2013 and 2020. This funding level effectively confirms and maintains the disproportionate cuts to nutrition spending made in 2021. This is extremely concerning, given the escalating need for nutrition interventions due to the Covid-19 pandemic, especially in countries in conflict and facing other vulnerable contexts.

The damaging impact of malnutrition on children's lives can be prevented through nutrition-specific interventions, including infant and young child feeding (IYCF) and relevant

breastfeeding and complementary feeding support, particularly in the critical first 1,000 days of life. There is an urgent need to curb the rising rate of malnutrition worldwide, and to meet the WHO global nutrition target for 2025 on maternal, infant and young child nutrition. This can be achieved with adequate funding from N4G donor countries, of which the UK has long been recognised as a key leader.

Since the Bond's last SDG report in 2019, the Independent Commission for Aid Impact (ICAI) has reviewed and assessed DFID's work on nutrition<sup>50</sup>. It found that DFID had made important advances in response to ICAI's previous review as well as significant progress on improving its nutrition results methodology, country programme implementation and national systems strengthening. The ICAI review confirmed that the UK surpassed its goal to reach 50 million people by 2020 through its nutrition programmes, and that long-term decreases in stunting have been made in countries where UK ODA is supporting nutrition. Disappointingly, the UK hasn't renewed its commitment to reach over 50 million children, women and adolescent girls with nutrition-relevant programmes in the next 5 years. This demonstrates a lack of ambition and inhibits the UK's ability to support good nutrition worldwide and meet its global health goal to end preventable deaths.

To ensure progress on its own Ending Preventable Deaths strategy, the UK government should consider how the actions of the FCDO will help to deliver performance metrics. Given that malnutrition plays a role in 45% of all under-5 deaths, a top-line indicator for the FCDO performance metric 'mortality rates in children under 5 years of age and new-borns' must be focused on the impact of its nutrition programming.

### Target 2.3:

**By 2030, double the agricultural productivity and incomes of small scale food producers, in particular women, indigenous peoples, family farmers, pastoralists and fishers, including through secure and equal access to land, other productive resources and inputs, knowledge, financial services, markets and opportunities for value addition and non-farm employment.**

In 2015, G7 countries adopted the Elmau Broad Food Security Commitment<sup>51</sup> to work with partner countries and international actors to lift 500 million people out of hunger and poverty. This initiative was set up in line with the 2030 Agenda and SDG 2. In 2021, the G7 under the UK presidency reported progress on all G7 indicators. For Indicator 2.1 (smallholder focus), the UK reported that less than half of its ODA programmes on agriculture and rural development

50. ICAI (2020), ['Report: Assessing DFID's results in nutrition: A results review'](#) [online document, accessed June 2022]

51. G7 (2015), ['Leaders' Declaration G7 Summit, 7-8 June 2015'](#)



included objectives with an explicit focus on smallholder farmers. On Indicator 2.2 (gender focus), the UK reported that only 24% of its programming included specific gender objectives. These results aren't encouraging, and fall short of a much-needed programmatic focus in UK ODA on smallholder farmers, in particular female farmers. These results also suggest that the UK has no disaggregated data to report progress on left-behind populations, such as pastoralists, fishers, family farmers and indigenous people. This is particularly concerning, given that Indicator 2.3.2 requires countries to provide data on the average income of small-scale food producers by sex and indigenous status. It also calls into question the UK's pledge to 'put the furthest behind first'<sup>52</sup>.

a positive fund to increase climate resilience practices and to support smallholder food producers. However, the UK government has failed to make an official contribution to the GAFSP's second replenishment.

A recent study led by CAFOD and the RSPB<sup>55</sup> shows that UK ODA now gives low priority to agriculture and land use and fails to recognise its importance in promoting poverty alleviation, protecting and restoring nature and tackling climate change. The report found the UK lacks a clear and consistent agricultural vision in its ODA strategy and has failed to design and manage coherent sector programming for targeted social and environmental outcomes. This limits the potential to support SDG 2 and tackle the global crises of nature loss and climate change, in line with the broader 2030 Agenda and global commitments led by the UK at the COP26 UN Climate Change Conference<sup>56</sup>.



### Target 2.4:

**By 2030, ensure sustainable food production systems and implement resilient agricultural practices that increase productivity and production, that help maintain ecosystems, that strengthen capacity for adaptation to climate change, extreme weather, drought, flooding and other disasters and that progressively improve land and soil quality.**

Extreme poverty and hunger continue to predominate in rural areas, with smallholder farmers and their families making up a significant proportion of people who are hungry and living in poverty. To eradicate poverty and hunger significant financial support is needed, including from UK ODA, for agroecological approaches that boost food production and consumption in a way that benefits people and nature. In 2021, the UK committed to report against the ten core performance criteria and five advanced criteria<sup>53</sup> provided by the Food and Agriculture Organization's Tool for Agroecology Performance Evaluation (TAPE)<sup>54</sup>, as part of the G7 Food Security Working Group process. While this is the right step to take to deliver on Target 2.4 and across SDG 2, there is a gap in reporting against these criteria. For instance, there is no consistent data on decreased exposure to pesticides, increased agricultural biodiversity, improved soil health or increased resilience. In the G7 Financial Report on Food Security and Nutrition for 2021, the UK reported that the FCDO's programming and policy work was seeking to adopt more climate-relevant practices appropriate to local contexts. In the report, the UK highlights the World Bank's Global Agricultural and Food Security Platform (GAFSP) as

52. DFID/FCDO (6 March, 2019), '[Policy paper: Leaving no one behind: Our promise](#)' [online document, accessed June 2022].

53. 1) Secure land tenure, 2) Increased productivity, 3) Increased income, 4) Added value, 5) Decreased exposure to pesticides, 6) Increased dietary diversity, 7) Women's Empowerment, 8) Increased youth employment, 9) Increased agricultural biodiversity, 10) Improved soil health, 11) Increased resilience, 12) Improved Food Security & Nutrition, 13) Decent Work, 14) Increased water use efficiency & decreased water pollution, and 15) Climate change mitigation.

54. FAO, '[Tool for Agroecology Performance Evaluation \(TAPE\)](#)' [web page, accessed June 2022].

55. CAFOD and RSPB (2021), '[Harnessing the potential of agriculture for people and nature: the role of UK aid](#)'

56. [UN Climate Change Conference 2021/COP26](#) [web page, accessed June 2022]



## To achieve SDG 2, the UK government should:

1. Immediately disburse its 2022 N4G nutrition funding commitment while ensuring that the policy maker ensures well planned and implemented nutrition-sensitive programmes across sectors, with funding scaled-up for countries in fragile contexts where people experience significant hunger and malnutrition. This commitment should be revised and increased ahead of the next N4G in 2024 to align with the investment needed to meet the WHO global nutrition targets by 2025 and SDG 2 by 2030.
2. Urgently scale up funding for humanitarian assistance to tackle ongoing hunger crises, such as in the Horn of Africa, while substantially investing in the prevention of such crises by tackling underlying drivers and building the resilience of communities to future shocks.
3. Report in all future voluntary national reviews on all ODA spent on agriculture and food systems against all criteria of the FAO's TAPE. This includes all relevant climate finance as part of the UK's new International Climate Finance Strategy. The UK should also make substantial contributions to the second replenishment of the GAFSP.
4. Align its international development strategy with the work of the G7 Food Security Working Group, the custodian of the Elmau Commitment, which will meet every year until at least 2030. The UK government should also increase its global support for sustainable agriculture, in line with Target 2.3. By the 2023 VNR, it must complete the review process and align all UK ODA with the FAO's Voluntary Guidelines on Responsible Governance.
5. Devise an updated inclusive data strategy in order to collect and report disaggregated data on left-behind populations, such as pastoralists, fishers, family farmers and indigenous people (as required by SDG Indicator 2.3.2).