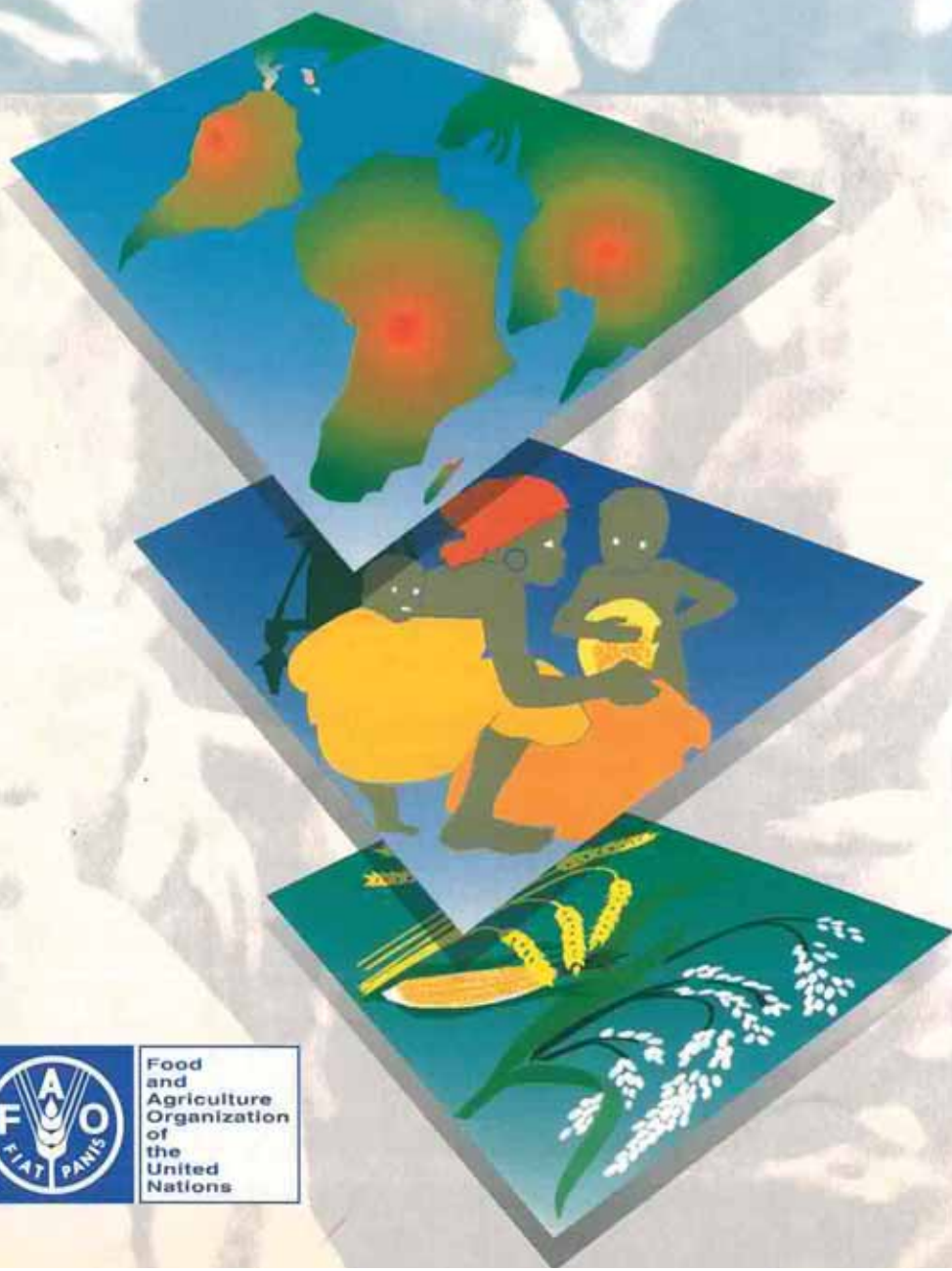


The Sixth **WORLD FOOD SURVEY**



Food
and
Agriculture
Organization
of
the
United
Nations

THE SIXTH WORLD FOOD SURVEY

Foreword

1996

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Foreword

It is very appropriate that *The Sixth World Food Survey* should be completed just before the World Food Summit that I have taken the initiative to convene in November 1996. The World Food Summit, which will bring together the heads of state and government from all regions of the world in Rome, will address a major problem facing today's world: hunger and food insecurity. The basic aim of FAO's world food surveys is to provide the information available on the levels and trends of world food supplies and the prevalence of food inadequacy and undernutrition. Thus, *The Sixth World Food Survey* will be a major contributor to the background information for deliberations on this subject at the Summit.

While the scope and contents of *The Sixth World Food Survey* are broadly similar to its predecessors, certain new features have been included. First, China and the former Asian centrally planned economies, which were previously excluded from traditional estimates of the prevalence of food inadequacy or undernutrition, are now included. Second, the methodology of estimation, while essentially the same as that of *The Fifth World Food Survey*, has been refined and improved in the light of improved knowledge. Third, there is now an expanded coverage of anthropometric indicators providing information on the nutritional status of subgroups such as children, adolescents and adults. Admittedly, however, the available data are still inadequate or imprecise for many countries and must therefore be supplemented by assumptions or the use of models in order to estimate the prevalence of food inadequacy. The solution to this problem depends crucially on the improvement of primary data collection efforts by countries. Therefore, I take this opportunity to urge member countries to assign a high priority to the collection and provision of basic data (production, trade, consumption and access to food by different population groups).

The main conclusion of the survey is that per caput dietary energy supplies have continued to increase in the developing countries as a whole, with the result that, during the two decades from 1969-71, the prevalence of food inadequacy declined: 20 percent of the total population had inadequate access to food in 1990-92 compared with 35 percent two decades ago. Even more remarkable was the improvement in absolute terms, i.e. fewer people faced inadequate food access in 1990-92 compared with 20 years ago, notwithstanding the addition of 1.5 billion people to the population of developing countries during this period. The number of people with inadequate access to food declined from 918 million in 1969-71 to 906 million in 1979-81 and further to 841 million in

1990-92. Nevertheless, this number was still very high in 1990-92, as one out of five people in the developing world faced food inadequacy.

The Sixth World Food Survey provides a wealth of data, especially in its Appendix tables which will hopefully assist national governments and international agencies in their joint effort to eliminate food inadequacy and undernutrition so that, one day in the not too distant future, food security may be guaranteed to all men and women everywhere.



Jacques Diouf
DIRECTOR-GENERAL

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