

Food and Water: Technical Notes

DEFINITIONS AND METHODOLOGY

Agricultural Land, in thousand hectares, is the total area of all arable and permanent cropland and permanent pasture. Arable land includes land under annual crops, temporary meadows, kitchen gardens, and land fallow for less than 5 years. Abandoned land resulting from shifting cultivation is not included. Permanent cropland is cultivated with crops that occupy the land for long periods and need not be replanted after each harvest, including land under trees grown for wood or timber. Permanent pasture is the amount of land used permanently (5 years or more) for herbaceous forage crops, either cultivated or growing wild (wild prairie or grazing land). Data on land use are reported by country governments, in surveys distributed by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO).

Fertilizer intensity measures the mass in kilograms of the nutrients nitrogen, potash, and phosphate consumed annually per hectare of arable and permanent cropland. Some countries report data based on the fertilizer year; that is, 2003 data actually encompassed July 1, 2003, to June 30, 2004. Data are collected through the FAO fertilizer questionnaire, with support from the Ad Hoc Working Party on Fertilizer Statistics.

Water intensity measures, in cubic meters, the annual volume of water used in the agricultural sector per hectare of arable and permanent cropland. Water use for agriculture is defined as the water withdrawals that are attributed to the agricultural sector, used primarily for irrigation. WRI calculates water intensity by dividing water use data by the extent of agricultural land, using statistics from FAO's AQUASTAT information system in the FAOSTAT database. To estimate agricultural water use, an assessment has to be made both of irrigation water requirements and of water withdrawals for agriculture. AQUASTAT collects its information from a number of sources, including national water resources and irrigation master plans; national yearbooks, statistics, and reports; reports from FAO; international surveys; and surveys made by national or international research centers.

Labor intensity refers to the percentage of the total labor force economically active in agriculture, hunting, forestry, or fishing. The International Labor Organization (ILO) defines economically active as "all persons of either sex who furnish the supply of labour for the production of economic goods and services." The ILO derives the labor estimates from population censuses and sample surveys. When country data are missing, the ILO estimates figures from similar neighboring countries or by using special models of activity rates. FAO provided the annual figures used for these calculations through interpolating and extrapolating the ILO's decennial series.

Calorie Supply, Total refers to the amount of available food per person per day, expressed in kilocalories. **Percent from Animal Products** refers to the percent of available food that is derived from animal products, including all types of meat and fish; animal fats and fish oils; edible offal; milk, butter, cheese, and cream; and eggs and egg products. FAO compiles statistics on apparent food consumption based on supply/utilization accounts (SUAs) maintained in FAOSTAT, its on-line statistical

service. FAO derives caloric values by applying food composition factors to the quantities of the processed commodities.

Percent of Population That is Undernourished refers to the proportion of the population with food intake that is continuously below a minimum dietary energy requirement for maintaining a healthy life and carrying out light physical activity. Data represent country averages over a 3-year period from 2002 to 2004. FAO estimates the number of undernourished individuals using calculations of the amount of food available in each country and a measure of inequality in distribution derived from household income/ expenditure surveys. The total undernourished population is calculated as the number of people who fall below a minimum energy requirement, which is estimated by sex and age group based on a reference body weight. This minimum energy requirement varies by country but typically averages between 1,750 and 2,030 kilocalories per person daily.

Fisheries Production data refer to both the nominal catch (capture) and the harvest (aquaculture) of fish, crustaceans, mollusks, aquatic mammals, and other aquatic animals taken for commercial, industrial, recreational, and subsistence purposes from marine, brackish, and inland waters. Statistics for aquatic plants are excluded from country totals. Data include all quantities caught and harvested for both food and feed purposes but exclude catch discarded at sea. Production of fish, crustaceans, and mollusks is expressed in live weight, the nominal weight of the aquatic organisms at the time of harvest. Most fisheries statistics are collected by FAO from questionnaires sent to national fisheries agencies. When these data are missing or considered unreliable, FAO estimates fishery production based on regional fishery organizations, project documents, industry magazines, or statistical interpolations.

Actual Renewable Water Resources gives the maximum theoretical amount of water annually available for each country in cubic kilometers. **Per Capita Actual Renewable Water Resources** gives the maximum theoretical amount of water annually available, on a per person basis, in cubic meters. Actual renewable water resources are defined as the sum of internal renewable resources (IRWR) and external renewable resources (ERWR), taking into consideration the quantity of flow reserved to upstream and downstream countries through formal or informal agreements or treaties and possible reduction of external flow due to upstream water abstraction. IRWR are composed of the average annual flow of rivers and recharge of groundwater (aquifers) generated from endogenous (internal) precipitation. ERWR are the portion of the country's renewable water resources that is not generated within the country, including inflows from upstream countries and a portion of border lakes or rivers.

Per capita water resources data are calculated by WRI using 2000 population estimates (or other appropriate year as indicated in footnotes) from the UN Population Division. Water resources data were compiled by the FAO from a number of sources: national water resources and irrigation master plans; national yearbooks, statistics, and reports; reports from FAO; international surveys; and surveys made by national or international research centers.

The **Water Poverty Index (WPI)** measures, for a given country, the impact of water scarcity and water provision on human populations. The WPI is a number between 0 and 100, where a low score indicates water poverty and a high score indicates good water provision. The WPI is the culmination of an interdisciplinary approach that combines both the physical quantities relating to water availability and the socioeconomic factors relating to poverty to produce an indicator that addresses the diverse factors that affect water resource management. The index is composed of five component indices: resources, access, capacity, use, and environment.

Use of an Improved Water Source measures the total proportion of the population with access to an improved drinking water source. An improved water source includes any of the following: household connections, public standpipes, boreholes, protected dug wells, protected springs, and rainwater collection. Improved water sources are more likely to provide safe drinking water than unimproved sources but are not a direct measure of “safe” drinking water. Examples of unimproved water sources include unprotected wells and springs, surface water, vendor-provided water, tanker-provided water, and bottled water if it is not consistently available in sufficient quantities. Both urban and rural access are shown here. Any person not inhabiting an area classified as urban is counted in the rural population. The definition of an urban area varies slightly from country to country; the smallest urban agglomerations typically have a population between 2,000 and 10,000 people. Data are collected by the World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) using a variety of household survey instruments, including the Demographic Health Surveys, Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys, Living Standards Measurement Studies, and World Health Surveys.

FREQUENCY OF UPDATE BY DATA PROVIDERS

Land, fertilizer, labor, nutrition, and fisheries data are updated annually by FAO. Water resources data are updated intermittently as new values become available. The Water Poverty Index was created by the Center for Ecology and Hydrology in 2002 and has not been updated. The Use of Improved Water Source data set is a Millennium Development Indicator and is updated every 1–3 years to measure a country’s progress toward the Millennium Development Goals.

DATA RELIABILITY AND CAUTIONARY NOTES

Agricultural Land: Data are compiled from various sources, so definitions and coverage do not always conform to FAO recommendations and may not always be completely consistent across countries.

Fertilizer: Data are excluded for some countries with a relatively small area of cropland, such as Iceland and Singapore. In these cases, the calculation of fertilizer consumed per hectare of cropland yields an unreliable number.

Labor: Values vary widely among and within countries according to labor scarcity, production technologies, and costs of energy and machinery. The annual figures for total number of agricultural workers were obtained by interpolating and extrapolating past trends (1950–2000), taken from ILO

decennial population series. As a result, fluctuations in the labor force may not be captured in annual figures. Labor intensity may be overestimated in countries with substantial fishing or forestry industries, since the total agricultural labor force includes some workers engaged in these activities.

Calorie Supply: Figures shown here represent only the average calorie supply available for the population as a whole and do not necessarily indicate what is actually consumed by individuals. Even if data are used as approximations of per capita consumption, it is important to note that there is considerable variation in consumption among individuals. Food supply data are only as accurate as the underlying production, trade, and utilization data.

Percent of Population That is Undernourished: Food balance sheets provide data for the available food supply, not specific consumption, so waste and other losses are not accounted for. Also, since production statistics are typically available only for major food crops, non-commercial or subsistence-level production is not always included. Crops that are either continuously or selectively harvested, such as cassava and plantains, may not be accurately accounted for, and subsistence hunting of wild game and insects is typically ignored. Data for 2002–2004 are preliminary. In all likelihood, these numbers will change in future revisions as estimates are refined.

Total Fisheries Production: FISHSTAT provides the most extensive global time series of fishery statistics since 1950. However, country-level data are often submitted with a 1–2 year delay. Statistics from smaller artisanal and subsistence fisheries are sparse. While these figures provide a good overview of regional trends, data should be used with caution and supplemented with estimates from regional organizations, academic literature, expert consultations, and trade data. For more information, consult *Fishery Statistics Reliability and Policy Implications*, published by the FAO Fisheries Department.

Water Resources: While AQUASTAT represents the most complete and careful compilation of water resources statistics to date, freshwater data are generally of poor quality. Sources of information vary but are rarely complete. Access to information on water resources is still sometimes restricted for reasons related to political sensitivity at the regional level. Many instances of water scarcity are highly localized and are not reflected in national statistics. In addition, the accuracy and reliability of information vary greatly among regions, countries, and categories of information, as does the year in which the information was gathered. As a result, no consistency can be ensured among countries on the duration and dates of the period of reference. All data should be considered order-of-magnitude estimates.

Water Poverty Index: The WPI focuses public attention on the important issue of water scarcity and allows individuals to quickly understand the degree of water stress in a country. However, the freshwater data used to build this index are incomplete and frequently incomparable across countries; users of this index should always treat these numbers as order-of-magnitude estimates.

Use of an Improved Water Source: These data have become more reliable as WHO and UNICEF shift from provider-based information (national census estimates) to consumer-based information (survey data). Nonetheless, comparisons among countries should be made with care. Definitions of urban and rural are not consistent across countries. The assessment does not account for intermittent or poor quality of water supplies.

SOURCES

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