



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

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After years of progress in reducing both absolute numbers and the proportion of the population experiencing malnourishment, the global situation is now deteriorating. Since 2014, the number of malnourished people grew by over 37 million to 821 million, increasing the proportion of global undernourished from 10.6% to 10.9%. Conversely, that of obese adults has increased from 11.7% to 13.2%, reflecting a growing inequality in access to sufficient and good quality food. A variety of factors have driven this shift, including persistent conflict, and climate shocks, such as the 2015/16 El Niño weather cycle. As climate change accelerates, the potential for more substantial deterioration grows (see **Goal 13**).<sup>1</sup>

Malnutrition is a complex and multi-sectoral issue that can only be addressed by tackling both its direct and underlying causes. Improvements in one cause alone, without addressing these underlying factors, are unlikely to be significant or sustainable. Other sectors that should be incorporated, with implications for the UK government's work on these issues, are agriculture, health (see **Goal 3**), social protection (see **Goal 1**) and water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) (see **Goal 6**).



### 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.**

In 2013, the UK government showed leadership by co-hosting the first ever Nutrition for Growth (N4G) Summit in London, mobilising £2.7bn to address the direct causes of undernutrition.<sup>2</sup> The UK announced a tripling of its nutrition-specific investments between 2013 and 2020, committing to an additional £655m to nutrition-specific programmes, including £32m to create a catalytic fund, the Power of Nutrition.<sup>3</sup> It also committed an additional £604m to nutrition-sensitive programmes and the establishment of a Global Panel on Agriculture and Food Systems for Nutrition, to strengthen evidence and policy leadership. As of 2016, the UK is on track to fully deliver these financial commitments, although it lags slightly behind on its nutrition-specific disbursements.<sup>4</sup>

The UK is now collaborating closely with the Japanese Government for a 2020 Summit to be held alongside the Tokyo Olympics. Current commitments end in 2020, so the summit in 2020 will be the next big opportunity to raise the UK's ambition and momentum. However, there is currently a risk of nutrition falling off the agenda again. Good nutrition is critical in boosting human survival, human potential, and

1. <http://www.fao.org/state-of-food-security-nutrition/en/>

2. [https://www.dsm.com/content/dam/dsm/cworld/en\\_US/documents/nutrition-for-growth-commitments.pdf](https://www.dsm.com/content/dam/dsm/cworld/en_US/documents/nutrition-for-growth-commitments.pdf)

3. [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/207271/nutrition-for-growth-commitments.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/207271/nutrition-for-growth-commitments.pdf)

4. [http://www.action.org/uploads/documents/Follow\\_the\\_Funding\\_Nutrition\\_Report\\_101618\\_final.pdf](http://www.action.org/uploads/documents/Follow_the_Funding_Nutrition_Report_101618_final.pdf)



economic prosperity, and offers great returns on investment. In light of this, current levels of investment and effort on **Goal 2** are not sufficient.

In 2015, the UK government made a commitment to improve nutrition for 50 million by 2020.<sup>5</sup> As of 2018, it reports having reached 42.1 million children, women, and adolescent girls with nutrition relevant programmes.<sup>6</sup> Around 9% of these were reached with the ideal high-intensity programmes, which deliver a package of integrated interventions leading to the greatest possible impact on nutrition. The majority (nearly 60%) were reached with medium-intensity programmes, and a further 16% with low-intensity programmes. DFID should look at the means of improving its existing medium-intensity programmes, to increase the overall number and scale of high-intensity programmes being delivered.

Better cross-sector working is essential to enable a whole-of-DFID approach to tackling malnutrition. The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that 50% of undernutrition - a major form of malnutrition - is associated with infections caused by unsafe water, poor sanitation and unhygienic practices, including not washing hands with soap.<sup>7</sup> Yet, DFID nutrition strategies, programmes and policies do not systematically include WASH (see Goal 6). Similarly, there are various steps that can be taken in WASH programmes to improve their nutrition-sensitivity, including better targeting to areas of highest undernutrition, incorporating nutrition objectives and outcomes, and integrating nutrition behaviours into hygiene promotion activities. Funding for cross sector-integration, including between malnutrition and WASH, should be ring-fenced, so it is actively mandated, and included in WASH and nutrition strategies, policies and programmes.

A 2014 report by ICAI on DFID’s contribution to improving nutrition raised several technical concerns. This included recommendations that DFID better target its nutrition interventions on reduction of stunting; and towards the needs of the most vulnerable women and children.<sup>8</sup>

While recognising the increased investment and numbers reached through nutrition interventions since then, it is difficult to assess at this present point whether DFID has successfully met these recommendations or is on track to meet its commitments under **Goal 2**. Reaching those furthest behind will require more and better investment, coordination, and focussed interventions. The UK government must work with other donors and stakeholders to ensure nutrition is improved in the countries and population groups that bear the greatest burden of malnutrition. This includes populations in fragile and conflict-affected states where malnutrition rates have been persistently high.

## Accountability

The N4G Summit emphasised the need for strong

5. [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/725014/Nutrition1.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/725014/Nutrition1.pdf)  
 6. Ibid.  
 7. <https://apps.who.int/iris>  
 8. <https://icai.independent.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/ICAI-REPORT-DFIDs-Contribution-to-Improving-Nutrition.pdf>

accountability for progress against commitments and global nutrition targets. The UK and others committed to the publication of an annual Global Nutrition Report (GNR), to track progress on country plans, spending on nutrition, and monitor progress on malnutrition reduction. DFID continues to invest in the GNR and provide an update on its 2013 commitments. Moreover, through its role on the GNR Stakeholder Group, it plays an important role in ensuring the rigour and relevance of evidence is maintained and the report makes concrete recommendations for further nutrition improvements.

DFID has also commissioned a series of annual reports to track its nutrition spending.<sup>9</sup> These reports enable civil society to hold the UK government to account for the quantity, geographical spread, and nature of DFID’s nutrition-specific and nutrition-sensitive spending.

In 2018, the UK and other donors within the OECD DAC Working Party on Development Finance Statistics agreed a proposal to introduce a new policy marker to improve tracking of and accountability for donor nutrition investments.<sup>10</sup> This marker, which comes into effect in 2020, will help to step up donor accountability by enabling greater assessment of cross-sectoral nutrition investments.

## Establishing policy priorities

DFID’s 2010 Nutrition Strategy expired in 2015. Albeit delayed, in 2017 DFID released a refreshed position paper, Saving Lives, Investing in Future Generations and Building Prosperity.<sup>11</sup> The paper sets out the UK’s plans and contributions to improve nutrition and ensure faster progress towards **Goal 2** and the World Health Assembly targets for 2025.<sup>12</sup> The paper identified priorities such as scaling-up, and addressing the nutritional needs of women, children, adolescent girls and those in fragile and conflict-affected states. While these are positive priorities, there are some gaps in focus, including the systematic integration of other development sectors (see above regarding WASH). While the paper recognises the importance of investing towards reducing obesity and the potential impact of not doing so, it states DFID will not work directly on the issue, limiting its scope only to not implementing interventions that may promote obesity. This perpetuates the idea that obesity is not a result of poverty and is a gap in coherence with the UK’s commitments under **Goal 3** (health and wellbeing).

The 2017 EDS commits DFID to challenge itself and others to make economic development work better for health and nutrition, and so maximise its impact on poverty reduction and prosperity.<sup>13</sup> This is a welcome addition. Given the positive impact of nutrition on human capital and economic

9. See latest report: <http://devinit.org/post/dfids-aid-spending-nutrition-2016/>  
 10. [http://www.oecd.org/officialdocuments/publicdisplaydocumentpdf/?cote=DCD/DAC/STAT\(2018\)38/REV1&docLanguage=En](http://www.oecd.org/officialdocuments/publicdisplaydocumentpdf/?cote=DCD/DAC/STAT(2018)38/REV1&docLanguage=En)  
 11. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/saving-lives-investing-in-future-generations-and-building-prosperity-the-uks-global-nutrition-position-paper>  
 12. <https://www.who.int/nutrition/global-target-2025/en/>  
 13. [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/587374/DFID-Economic-Development-Strategy-2017.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/587374/DFID-Economic-Development-Strategy-2017.pdf)



progress, DFID should follow this with an organisational review of its approach to boosting economic development in low- and middle-income countries to ensure it includes a focus on nutrition.

Engaging with other actors

Since the establishment of the Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) movement in 2010, DFID has been an active member of the SUN Donor Network and expressed continued support to the SUN Movement 2016-2020 Roadmap.14 Through its engagement, DFID helps to catalyse global momentum for addressing malnutrition in more than 60 high-burden countries, supports civil society capacity in the majority of these countries, and supports governments towards improved ownership of malnutrition and accelerated action.

The UK's support for Target 2.2, through its investments, accountability structures and political leadership, has been consistently high since 2013. However, as its current commitments (particularly on nutrition) end in 2020, continued efforts, focus and scale up beyond that point are vital for ending all forms of malnutrition by 2030.

inadvertently supporting such harmful processes.

DFID's Conceptual Framework on Agriculture (2015) placed an emphasis on commercialisation and its harmful impact on nutrition, but this was only weakly linked to the Global Nutrition Position Paper (2017).17 Both represented climate change as a peripheral issue, regarding it as something for future action or relegating it to "cross-cutting issue" status. Also, the two papers defined farmers only according to economic indicators, not reflecting the cultural, environmental and social factors that small scale farmers, who represent 60% of the global total, also value, or indeed their aspirations for a better livelihood.

Agriculture is a diverse and vibrant sector made up of people that require relevant and context-specific support in order to enhance their sustainability, resilience and productivity. The paper in its current format does little to recognise this, or indeed the significant role of women, who are estimated to manage up to 90% of staple food crop production.18

The situation facing agricultural workers, producers and small scale farmers, many of whom are women facing particular barriers due to lack of land rights, smaller plots of less fertile land, and exposure to gender based abuse, exploitation and violence when working in global supply chains, is also of particular relevance to Goal 8 (decent jobs).19 DFID's EDS mentions the need to create productive jobs in agriculture, but this has tended to support the promotion of large scale agribusinesses above small scale farmers. This has a concomitant negative impact on poverty reduction (Goal 1), gender equality (Goal 5) and environmental sustainability (Goal 15).20



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 a growing number of systems, agricultural productivity is either stagnant or declining due to the multiple effects of environmental degradation and climate change, coupled with the expansion of chemical agriculture that both drives up greenhouse gas emissions and reduces adaptive capacity (see also Goal 13).

This combination is predicted to reduce global crop yields by 2050 by an average of 10%, and by up to 50% in some regions.15 Most degradation will occur in Central and South America, sub-Saharan Africa and Asia; areas where poverty is most concentrated. Small scale producer land tenure systems, especially the common property land tenure many operate under, continue to be weakened, not least by international land deals now covering 148.2 million acres.16

DFID needs to do more explicit analysis on the way conventional, productivity-oriented chemical agriculture has driven deterioration in food security and increased degradation of both land and climate, to ensure the UK is not



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.

38% of the world's cropland is now degraded, costing an estimated \$40bn annually, excluding the hidden costs of increased fertiliser use, loss of biodiversity and loss of unique landscapes.21 Widespread use of agrochemicals is a major driver of this degradation, with research confirming

14. https://scalingupnutrition.org/about-sun/the-sun-movement-strategy/

15. https://www.ipbes.net/assessment-reports/ldr

16. https://landmatrix.org/en/

17. https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dfids-conceptual-framework-on-agriculture

18. https://farmingfirst.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2012/06/Global-Forum-for-Rural-Advisory-Services\_Fact-Sheet-on-Extension-Services.pdf

19. http://www.fao.org/gender/resources/infographics/the-female-face-of-farming/en/

20. https://waronwant.org/media/dfid-and-agribusiness-africa-toxic-mix

21. https://www.gaiafoundation.org/post-library/agriculture-at-a-crossroads-international-assessment-of-agricultural-knowledge-science-and-technology-for-development-iaastd/

the need to reduce environmental levels of reactive nitrogen (largely from chemical fertilisers) by 75% to avoid catastrophes. Such catastrophes include: climate change, since 6% of greenhouse gases are emitted as nitrous oxide; contamination of groundwater (see **Goal 13**); and large scale ocean anoxic events (see **Goal 14**).<sup>22</sup> Continued intensification, especially through an anticipated doubling of chemical fertiliser and pesticide use by 2050, will drive further degradation and climate change.<sup>23</sup>

The UK should be doing much more to address the interrelationships between land degradation and climate change in its international work on nutrition and agriculture (see **Goal 13**).

Policies that focus on agricultural commercialisation to the exclusion of other drivers of hunger are unlikely to be successful. Instead, programmes should focus on: empowering producers and farmers associations based on their priorities, with an emphasis on women producers; providing support and advisory services that meet demand and are relevant to context; increasing capacity to access markets; and improving resilience and sustainability. Reversing land degradation and adapting to climate change - and its consequent effects on food production and hunger - will require a wholesale transformation to agro-ecological approaches that have also shown enhanced productivity, resilience, profitability and carbon sequestration performance when compared to conventional, chemical agriculture.<sup>24</sup> The UK, in particular DFID, should do more to research and integrate such methods into its programming.

This hidden catastrophe erodes the basis of small scale farmers' ability to build resilience through drawing on the rich diversity built up over centuries of selective breeding. Far from promoting fair and equitable sharing of genetic resources and traditional knowledge, legislators continue to promote measures that disempower, marginalise and fail to compensate.

The Arusha Protocol for the Protection of New Varieties of Plants (2015) does not recognise farmers' rights and fails to acknowledge the contributions made by farmers to the conservation and development of plant genetic resources. For example, in Tanzania, the country for which the Protocol is named, this makes up 90% of seeds used.<sup>27</sup> The Protocol and the laws that it promotes are designed to facilitate expansion of the commercial seed sector at the expense of genetic property rights, agro-biodiversity and sustainability of farmers. It fails to facilitate the conservation of varieties from which future resilience will be developed.

Instead of supporting implementation of the Protocol, the UK should emphasise supporting the rights of small scale producers, especially women producers. This should be done through strengthening land tenure, so they can make long-term investments in resilience, and through genetic property rights that protect them from unrestricted exploitation by commercial interests and guarantee their right to produce, sell and exchange seeds, as set out in the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources in Food and Agriculture.<sup>28</sup>



### Target 2.5:

**By 2020, maintain the genetic diversity of seeds, cultivated plants and farmed and domesticated animals and their related wild species, including through soundly managed and diversified seed and plant banks at the national, regional and international levels, and promote access to and fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from the utilization of genetic resources and associated traditional knowledge, as internationally agreed.**

In the last century, there has been a loss of 90% of the genetic diversity in the planet's 20 main crops and 75% of crop diversity.<sup>25</sup> In addition to this, 30% of livestock breeds are at risk of extinction and six are lost every month.<sup>26</sup>

22. <https://www.nature.com/articles/461472a>

23. [http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTWDRS/Resources/477365-1327599046334/8394679-1327599874257/Pingali-Global\\_Agricultural\\_Performance.pdf](http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTWDRS/Resources/477365-1327599046334/8394679-1327599874257/Pingali-Global_Agricultural_Performance.pdf)

24. <http://www.fao.org/3/i1235e/i1235e00.htm>

<http://www.fao.org/family-farming/detail/en/c/282591/>

[http://www.fao.org/fileadmin/user\\_upload/rome2007/docs/Organic\\_Agriculture\\_and\\_Carbon\\_Sequestration.pdf](http://www.fao.org/fileadmin/user_upload/rome2007/docs/Organic_Agriculture_and_Carbon_Sequestration.pdf)

<https://www.christianaid.org.uk/sites/default/files/2017-08/time-for-climate-justice-15-climate-resilient-agriculture-july-2015.pdf>

25. <https://pubs.iied.org/pdfs/G03516.pdf>

26. <http://www.fao.org/3/y5609e/y5609e02.htm>

27. <https://acbio.org.za/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/Tanzania-Seed-Law-2016.pdf>

28. <http://www.fao.org/plant-treaty/en/>



**To achieve Goal 2, the UK government should:**

- Make equitable improvements in DFID's nutrition work by focusing on the groups and geographical areas that have been left behind, including adolescents, young children, women and people living in fragile and conflict affected states. Review DFID's decision in its 2017 Nutrition Policy to not work on obesity in recognition of the link between obesity and poverty.
- Ensure continued international attention and investment on nutrition, including through international opportunities like the N4G Summit. When current UK commitments expire in 2020, announce new and catalytic investments at the Japan 2020 Summit. Leverage the UK's role on the OECD DAC and in the SUN Movement to influence other donors and governments to make nutrition commitments through ODA and domestic resources.
- Ensure a whole-of DFID approach to tackling malnutrition. Provide ring-fenced funding for cross-sector integration, including between malnutrition and WASH. Include cross-sector integration in nutrition and WASH strategies, policies and programmes.
- Better join up DFID's agricultural and nutrition policies. Mainstream both through the UK's work on economic empowerment and climate change mitigation and adaptation.
- Make sure that international programmes on agriculture focus on: empowering producers, groups and associations; providing context-specific support and advisory services that meet demand; and improving resilience and sustainability.
- Support the rights of small scale producers, especially women farmers. Support their strengthened land tenure to enable long-term investments in resilience. Support small scale producers to obtain genetic property rights, as set out in the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources in Food and Agriculture.

This chapter is part of Bond's report, **The UK's global contribution to the Sustainable Development Goals.**

Access the rest of the report at [bond.org.uk/UK-global-contribution-SDGs](https://bond.org.uk/UK-global-contribution-SDGs)

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