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Food Day praise for Brazil, China

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The report says China has cut the number of hungry by 58 million

Brazil and China have been praised, but India criticised, in a new report that evaluates the efforts of developing countries to tackle hunger.

ActionAid produced the set of rankings in a report released on Friday, designated World Food Day by the UN.

The report also judges the efforts of rich countries, saying Luxembourg is trying hardest to end global hunger. The US and New Zealand rank bottom.

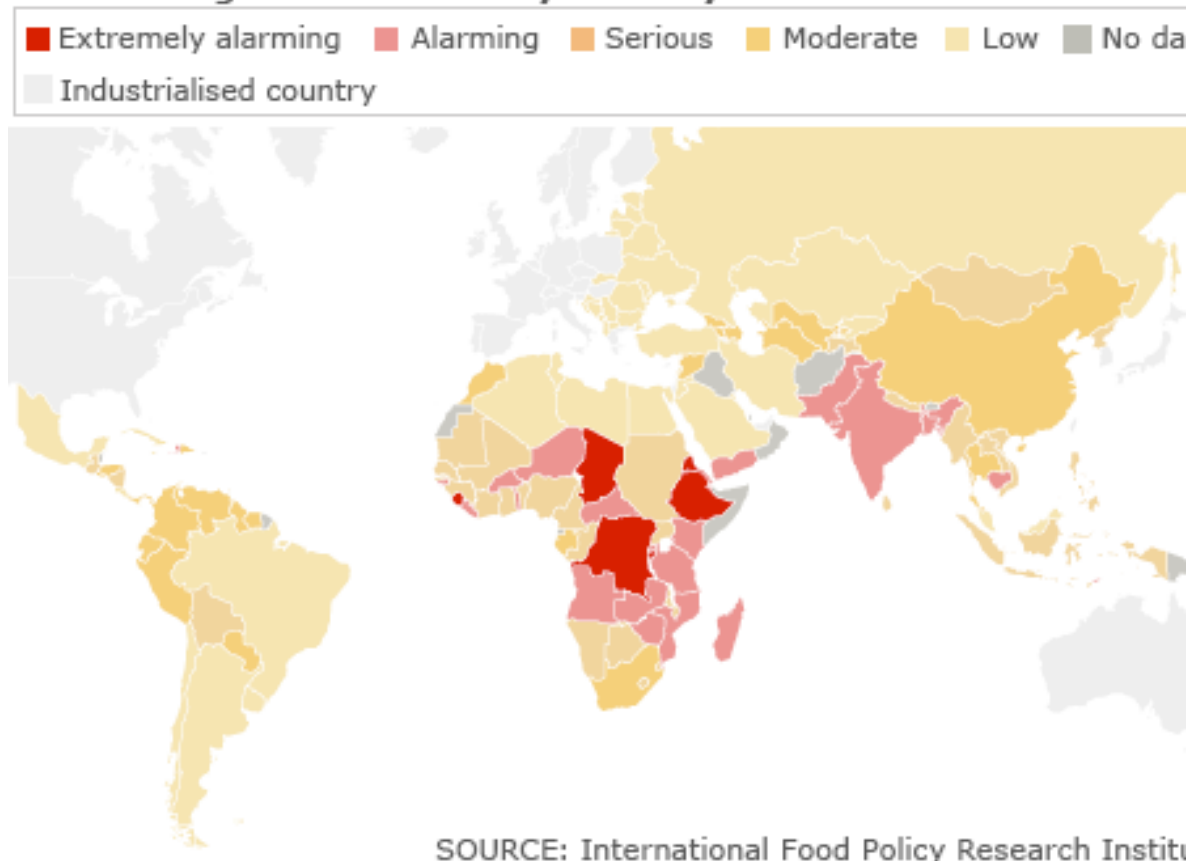
Studies estimate that one billion people are malnourished globally.

That figure, given in studies by a number of think tanks and aid agencies, represents roughly one in seven of the world's population.

Smallholder farmers

ActionAid's rankings name names. Among the developing countries, Brazil wins the top spot, with the aid agency praising President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva's support for land reform and community kitchens for the poor.

Global hunger index 2009 by severity



China is also praised for cutting the number of hungry by 58 million in 10 years through strong state support for smallholder farmers.

But the report criticises economically liberal India where, it says, 30 million people have been added to the ranks of the hungry since the mid-1990s.

ActionAid judges rich countries too, praising those that have invested in agriculture in the developing world but criticising others that have promoted biofuels which, the report says, have displaced food crops.

The rankings are weighted to account for what ActionAid calls effort and progress, not just outcomes.

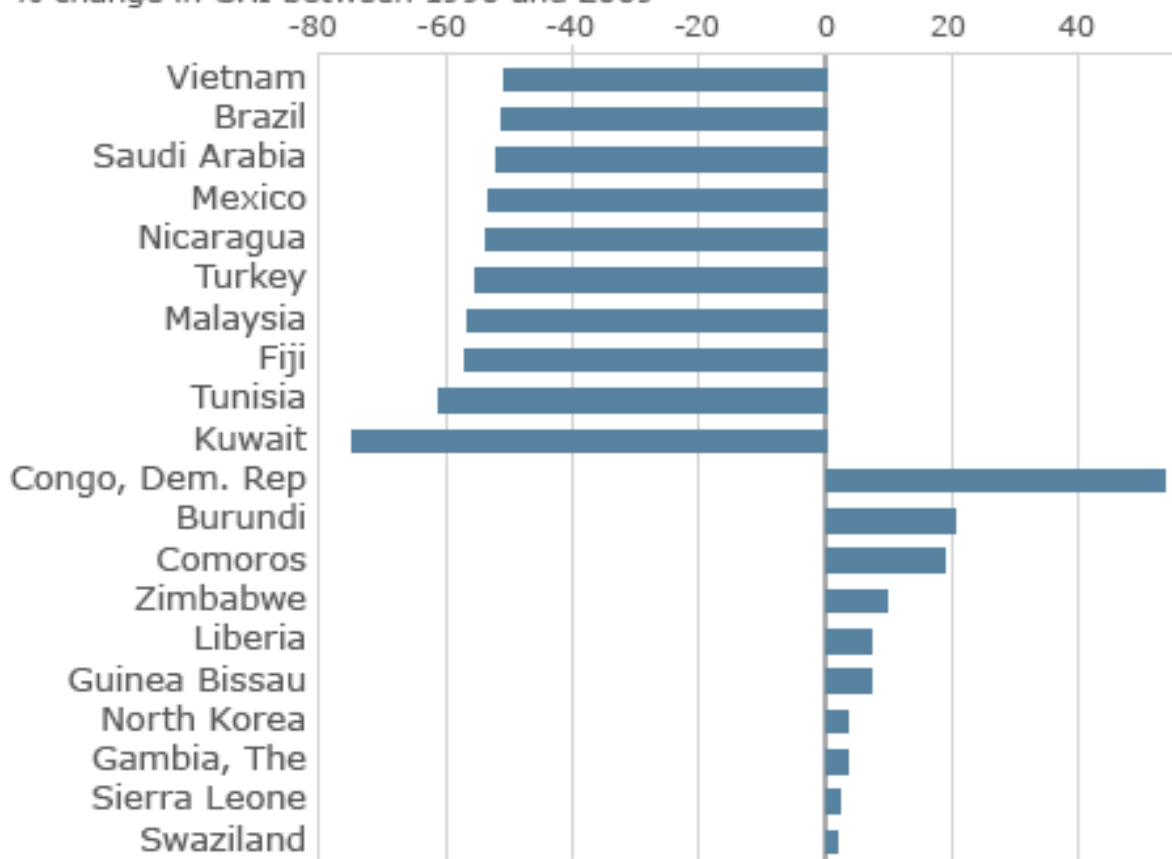
That is how the winner in the rich country list is tiny Luxembourg, with all the Nordic countries close behind.

New Zealand, however, is bottom of the rich country list, accused of making particularly harsh cuts in its official aid to agriculture.

And the US is second from last, described as "miserly" in its aid to developing world farmers.

Global hunger

% change in GHI between 1990 and 2009



Source: International Food Policy Research Institute

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Global hunger worsening, warns UN



Parts of Africa are badly affected by hunger

Targets to cut the number of hungry people in the world will not be met without greater international effort, UN food agencies have warned.

The UN's annual report on global food security confirms that more than one billion people - a sixth of the world's population - are undernourished.

It says the number of hungry people was growing before the economic crisis, which has

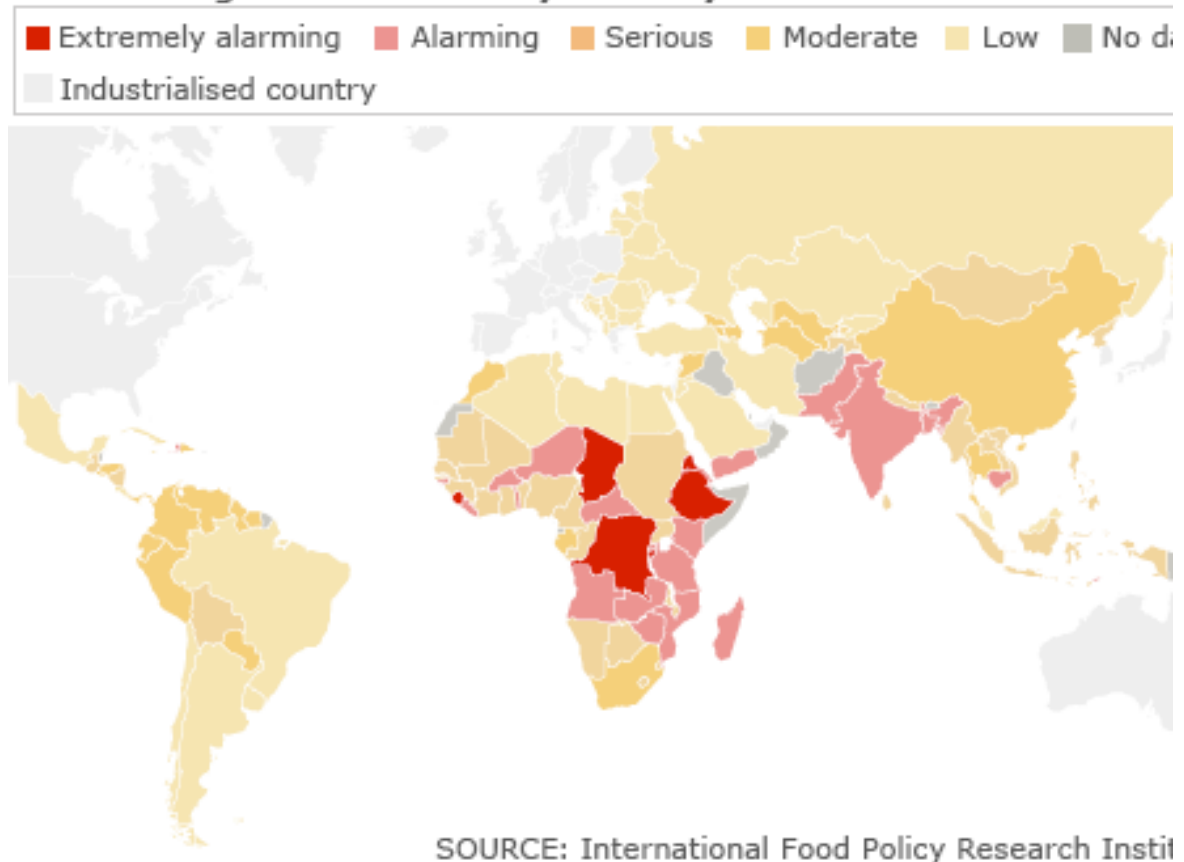
made the situation worse.

The report comes ahead of World Food Day on Friday.

"No nation is immune and, as usual, it is the poorest countries and the poorest people that are suffering the most," said the annual report of the UN's Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the World Food Programme.

The FAO says Asia and the Pacific has the largest number of hungry people - 642 million - followed by Sub-Saharan Africa with 265 million.

Global hunger index 2009 by severity



"FAO estimates that 1.02 billion people are undernourished worldwide in 2009," it said. "This represents more hungry people than at any time since 1970 and a worsening of the unsatisfactory trends that were present even before the economic crisis."

It added: "The World Food Summit target of reducing the number of undernourished people by half to no more than 420 million by 2015 will not be reached if the trends that prevailed before those crises continue."

The report, released in Rome, says the economic downturn has reduced foreign aid and investment in poorer countries and cut remittances from those working abroad.

It says the loss of income is compounded by food prices that are "still relatively high".

The UN agencies are urging international investment in agriculture and economic safety nets for poorer countries "despite financial constraints faced by governments around the world".

FAO Director General Jacques Diouf is to present a "toolbox" for helping countries to fight hunger on Thursday.

Steepest increases

The Global Hunger Index - a survey published by the International Food Policy Research Unit (IFPRI) - reveals that the Democratic Republic of Congo has seen the steepest rise in hunger since 1990, followed by Burundi, the Comoros and Zimbabwe.

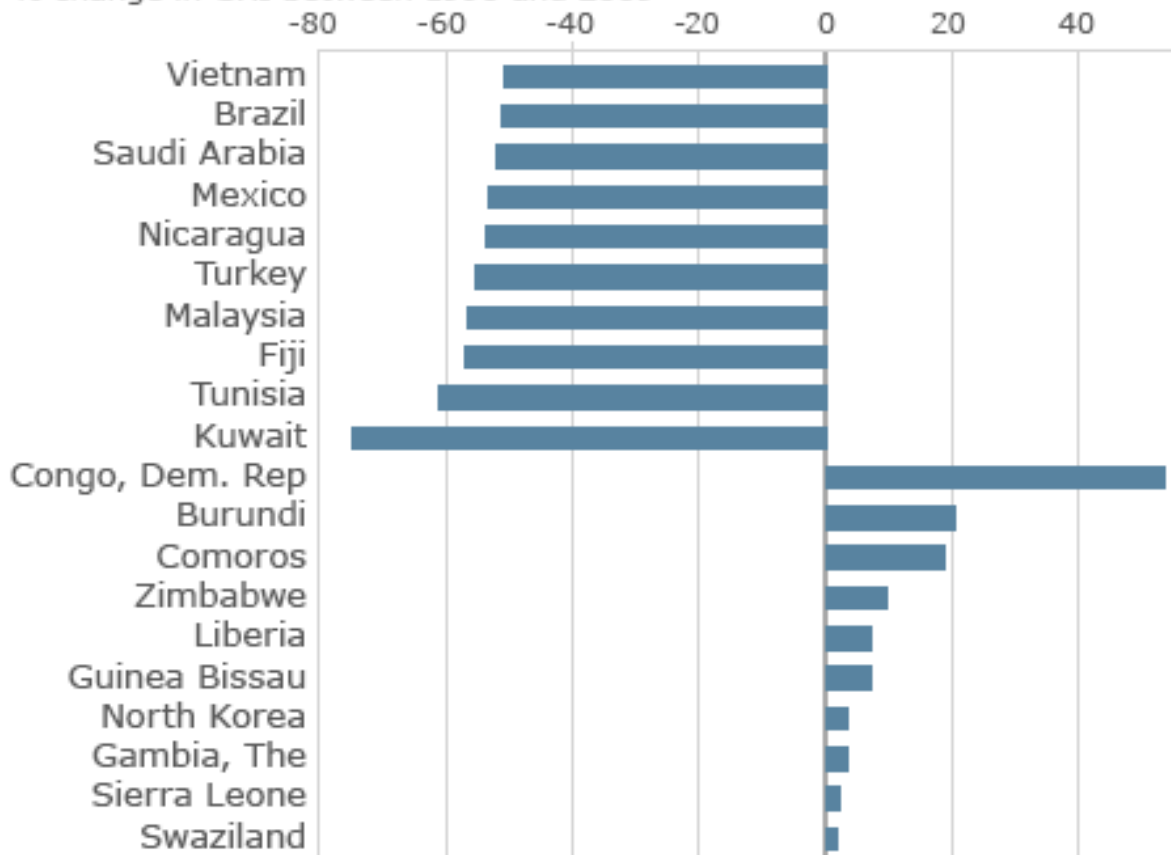
However, it says some countries have dramatically improved levels of malnutrition since 1990, including Vietnam, Brazil, Saudi Arabia and Mexico.

The survey describes a "food price crisis", with prices settling at levels too high for many people in developing countries.

The survey suggests that empowering more women in developing countries through education and better access to jobs is a key to reducing world hunger.

Global hunger

% change in GHI between 1990 and 2009



Source: International Food Policy Research Instit

