Nutrition country profile

Somalia

Demographics

Total population (2020):
15 893 219
Life expectancy at birth (years) female/male (2020):
59.2/54
Under-5 mortality rate (per 1000 live births) (2019):
117
Gross domestic product per capita (current US$) (2020):
309.4

Source: The World Bank

Child malnutrition

According to the Global Health Observatory, the prevalence of wasting in Somalia increased slightly from 13.3% in 2006 to 14.3% in 2009. The prevalence of stunting has decreased from 31.9% to 27.4% over the past two decades, staying very close to the regional average. During the same period, the prevalence of overweight in children under five in Somalia has decreased from 4.5% to 2.9%, which is significantly lower than the regional average.

Source: WHO Global Health Observatory.
An overall increase in the prevalence of overweight among adults in Somalia was recorded between the years 2000 and 2016 (from 20% to 28.4%). Also, the prevalence of overweight among children and adolescents aged 5–19 rose from 6.3% in 2000 to 12.9% in 2016.

**Overweight and obesity**

An overall increase in the prevalence of overweight among adults in Somalia was recorded between the years 2000 and 2016 (from 20% to 28.4%). Also, the prevalence of overweight among children and adolescents aged 5–19 rose from 6.3% in 2000 to 12.9% in 2016.

BMI = body mass index. (Overweight in adults is defined as a BMI of 25 or greater, and in children and adolescents as a BMI one or more standard deviations above the median. Obesity in adults is defined as a BMI of 30 or greater, and in children and adolescents as a BMI two or more standard deviations above the median.)

Despite the low incidence of obesity among adults in Somalia, its prevalence has nearly doubled between 2000 and 2016, from 4.1% to 8.3%. Similarly, the prevalence of obesity among children and adolescents aged 5–19 has tripled between 2000 and 2016 from 0.8% to 3%.

Source: WHO Global Health Observatory.
Micronutrient status

The prevalence of vitamin A deficiency among preschool children (aged 6–59 months), defined as retinol binding protein <0.70 μmol/L, was 34.4% in 2019. The iodine intake, determined by median urinary iodine concentration (UIC) (μg/L) in Somalia was excessive (defined as ≥ 300 μg/L) as the estimated median UIC among school children was 417 μg/L in 2009.²

Source: WHO Micronutrients Database, Vitamin and Mineral Nutrition Information System.

Nutrition policies and strategies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key national programmes</th>
<th>Date</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Development of national nutrition strategy or action plan a, b</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plan of action for obesity prevention</td>
<td>×</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategy or plan of action on infant and young child feeding a, c</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<tr>
<td>Code of marketing of breast milk substitutes</td>
<td>×</td>
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<tr>
<td>Child growth monitoring</td>
<td>×</td>
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<tr>
<td>School feeding programme</td>
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Policies

- Policy to reduce salt/sodium consumption
- Tax on sugar sweetened beverages
- Policy to limit trans-fatty acid intake
- Policy to reduce the impact of marketing of food to children
- Policy on salt iodization d
- Front-of-pack nutrition labelling for food
- Wheat flour fortification

Note: The WHO estimates for overweight and obesity are derived from a Bayesian hierarchical model which uses NCD-RisC database of population-based data. The model has a hierarchical structure in which estimates for each country and year are informed by its own data, if available, and by data from other years in the same country and from other countries, especially those in the same region with data for similar time periods. Due to this method, the estimates may differ from official estimates of Member States. The methodology is described here: https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/29029897/.

Source: WHO Micronutrients Database, Vitamin and Mineral Nutrition Information System.

Success stories

Management of severe acute malnutrition

WHO is working hard to sustain and increase its support to the stabilization centres in Somalia to enhance and improve the clinical outcome of the case management of severe acute malnutrition with medical complications. In 2021, WHO provided training on this type of case management for 100 health care workers from 37 stabilization centres in Somalia. The main goal of this training was to improve the knowledge and skills of health care staff on the inpatient management of severely malnourished children with medical complications in hospital.