

CUBA

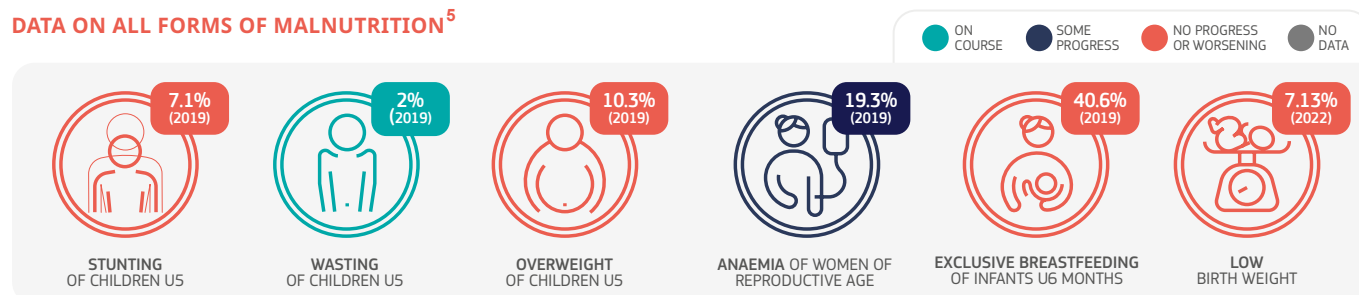
Nutrition situation in CUBA

AT A GLANCE

Cuba has a population of 11.2 million¹; 23% live in rural areas. Although Cuba has enough arable land and biocapacity to be food self-sufficient, 80% of food is imported. This is due to a combination of the US embargo, which restricts access to agricultural fuel and supplies, high vulnerability to climate change, insufficient investment in infrastructure and technology, low added value, and an ageing rural population. Cuba is experiencing a deep economic crisis, with a serious shortage of critical supplies, including in nutrition, food, hygiene and support for agricultural production². Access to safely managed water systems remains limited. Cuba has one of the lowest malnutrition

indexes in South America; however, 9% of children in Cuba suffer from severe food insecurity³ according to a recently released UNICEF report. The average Cuban household diet is poor in micronutrients and not sufficiently healthy or diverse, due to limited and fluctuating availability of nutritious food, socioeconomic factors and poor eating habits⁴. Cuba faces a growing obesity problem due to excessive consumption of carbohydrates and fats, and an increase in micronutrient deficiencies. Cuba is taking steps to reverse overweight rates in children under 5 through nutrition education and promotion of healthy diets. Cuba is ranked 73 out of 170 in the Gender Inequality Index (2022).

DATA ON ALL FORMS OF MALNUTRITION⁵



The data reported in the 2023 EU Nutrition Country Profiles is drawn from the UNICEF/WHO/World Bank Joint Child Malnutrition Estimates and the Global Nutrition Report (GNR).

NUTRITION GOVERNANCE

- Food security and nutrition are high priorities for the Cuban Government, as outlined in its national plan for economic and social development to 2030.
- People's right to food is guaranteed in the new constitution.
- In recent years (2019-2022), Cuba set the basis for the transformation of its Cuban food system, focusing on decentralisation of production.
- This crucial reform process resulted in new regulatory framework to which several EU funded projects contributed.
- There is a 2022 food and nutritional sovereignty law (SSAN Law) and a policy to promote territorial development (PIDT), aimed at the main productive centres, and for inter-municipal value chains.
- Various national programmes exist to ensure all Cubans have access to food, adapted to the needs of the beneficiaries (maternity & infant program, School Food Programme, etc) although in recent years the economic crisis has had an impact on the quantity and quality of food offered.
- In 2009 the Health Ministry (MINSAP) developed the Cuban food based dietary guidelines (FBDGs).
- The Cuban food biotechnology research sector is undertaking and collaborating with reputed institutions to improve and develop bioproducts (Erasmus+, ADELANTE2), aiming to improve food and nutrition security and safety.

Example of EU support

The EU-funded project 'Ecological Transition towards Sustainable Municipalities in Cuba' was signed in 2024 with the implementing partner Italian Agency for Development Cooperation (AICS), with a budget of EUR 31 million. Nutrition is covered under two of the action's specific objectives:

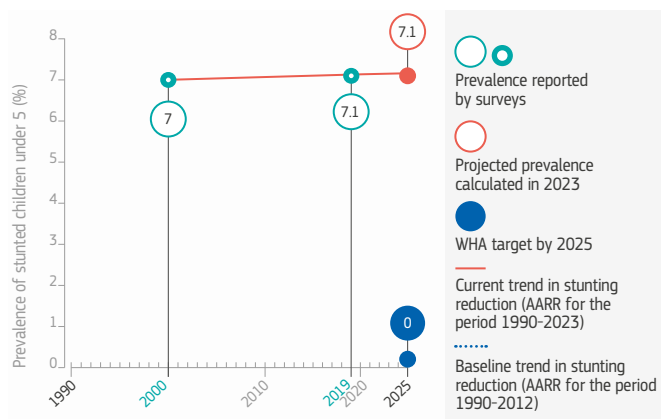
- Increase agro-ecological and clean energy production towards municipal self-sufficiency, with efficiency, innovation and circular approach. Through this objective the project will contribute to municipal self-sufficiency by increasing the agroecological production of complementary nutritional products.
- Increase the contribution of all municipal actors to local development with gender and social dimensions by developing capacities related to agroecology (production - supply) and nutrition (consumption - demand) aiming at progressing towards a more sustainable and healthier food production and consumption.

The main nutritional indicator in the logical framework is that 1.1 % of nutritional needs are covered by local production.

The project is part of the Team Europe Initiative on ecological transition, which has also nutrition as a relevant objective. The EU is also funding a nutrition study through ECHO and with UNICEF, to be finalised in 2024.



Progress on the two EU pledges for nutrition



TREND, PROJECTION AND TARGETS IN THE PREVALENCE AND NUMBER OF CHILDREN (U5) STUNTED

Cuba has experienced no changes in stunting prevalence since 2000, which has remained at 7%. The number of children stunted has not really changed due to population growth. The rate of decline in the number of children stunted has changed from 1.8% in 2012 to 0.1% in 2022. If this trend continues, the country is unlikely to reach the national target to reduce chronic malnutrition to 5% in 2025. Recent projections are expecting nearly 35 000 children to be stunted in 2025.

EU FINANCIAL COMMITMENTS TO NUTRITION BETWEEN 2014 AND 2020

The EU contributed up to EUR 34 million to improve food security and strengthen sustainable agriculture⁶. The EU-Cuba flagship programme, Strategic Support to Sustainable Food Security in Cuba ('SAS-Cuba'), totalling EUR 19.65 million, was signed in 2019 and is entering its 4th year of implementation. AGRO-LAIF blending (AFD) and DESIRA (FAO) projects totalling EUR 10.2 million, are contributing as well to improve the resilience of the local communities to climate change. For the period 2021-2024, the EU has committed EUR 31 million for the project 'Ecological Transition towards Sustainable Municipalities in Cuba', described above⁷.

Planning for nutrition 2021-2027

Cuba is facing the remaining effects of the COVID-19 pandemic together with a severe economic crisis worsened by the US embargo. This fragile socio-economic situation has been exacerbated by severe drought in some regions and a cycle of damaging hurricanes. All these factors are having an impact on food production and value chains, increasing poverty and heightening food and nutrition insecurity.

Nutrition forms part of the 360-degree approach of the EU's Global Gateway. The EU has worked together with Cuba for 3 decades, strengthening the country's capacity to increase food production. This approach has taken different forms over the years: initially through food aid programmes, then supporting strategies to strengthen value chains and increase the sustainability of agricultural production; and now towards a sustainable food and nutritional education system. The EU's central nutrition concerns in Cuba are overweight and obesity, as well as micronutrient deficiencies.

The EU and the Cuban government have convergent interests around the 2030 Agenda, the EU Green Deal and the National Environmental Strategy ('Tarea Vida'). The MIP 2021-2027 has identified two priority areas for EU cooperation with Cuba, both with links to Cuba's national Food and Nutrition Sovereignty policy:

Priority 1: Ecological transition: Sustainable municipalities. This priority emphasises the need for an ecological transition towards sustainable and resilient local food production in line with the 'Policy for the Promotion of Territorial Development' and with SDG 2, enhancing local food systems governance and innovation, and aiming for food self-sufficiency at municipal level.

Priority 2: Modernising the economy, maximising the potential of all economic actors in key sectors. The project 'Ecological Transition towards Sustainable Municipalities in Cuba' is in the process of being signed between the EU and the Cuban government.

The EU/Cuba TEI on the ecological transition will prioritise climate change adaptation mainly through sustainable agriculture. In its local dimension it will support selected municipalities to increase sustainability (integrating food and energy production); in its national dimension it will support policies (land-use planning); and in its Latin American and global dimension, it will foster cooperation with third countries in preparedness and response to natural disasters and environment-related crisis outbreaks. The main objectives related to food and nutrition are the agroecological production of food in line with SDG 2. A cross-cutting gender perspective will be taken into account in achieving these objectives.

1 - UNDESA World Population Prospects 2022 population, population estimate July 2024.

2 - In 2023 the agricultural sector operated with approximately 40% of the fuel required, 4% of fertilisers, 20% of animal feed and lacked basic inputs. This scenario, coupled with a low level of investment (3% of total investment), resulted in negative figures and unfulfilled plans in essential productions: in December 2023, the authorities reported a decrease in the production of viands, maize, pork, milk and eggs compared to 2022.

3 - This condition means that these children have access to a maximum of only two out of the eight essential foods necessary for a healthy life. Last February 2024 Cuban government requested help to WFP in providing children under seven years with subsidised milk (the basic basket of the Cuban population includes the supply of powdered milk to children, at subsidised prices, from birth to 6 years of age. This has been guaranteed uninterruptedly, even in the years when the situation of the national economy has been most complex).

4 - WFP 2022 Cuba annual report

5 - JME data 2023

6 - These investments were not reported in the financial tracking systems used by the EC, the SUN Resource Tracking methodology (2014-2020) and the Nutrition Policy Marker (2021 onwards), and therefore not shown in the financial graph.

7 - MIPs Cuba 2021-2027. The project has not been tracked in the resource tracking system.