
A decorative graphic on the left side of the page consisting of four horizontal bars of different colors (green, teal, blue, purple) that are wider on the left and taper to the right, creating a funnel-like effect.

Using the Food Systems Dashboard to
better understand dietary changes and the
multiple forms of malnutrition across Asia
for development practitioners

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Purpose and Use

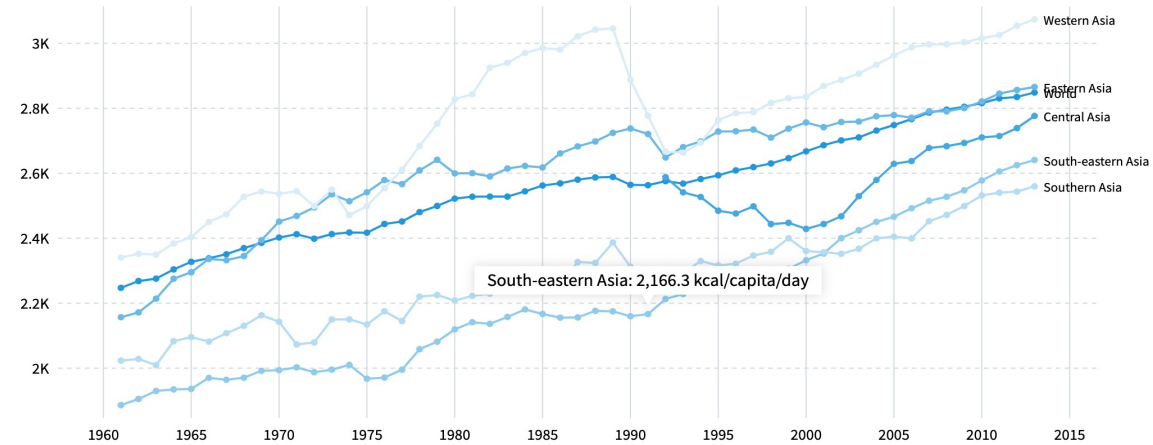
These briefs demonstrate how various stakeholders can use the Food Systems Dashboard to inform their work.

- The purpose of this brief is to show how development practitioners can use the Food Systems Dashboard (FSD) to understand trends across a region and over time relating to nutrition transitions.
- The FSD includes many indicators that can be used to assess the multiple burdens regions and subregions may face around malnutrition.
- Malnutrition includes undernutrition (e.g., underweight and vitamin deficiencies) and excess calorie intake, which can lead to noncommunicable diseases (NCDs) such as diabetes.
- Challenges arise when diets change in ways that do not support sufficient nutrients and/or calories consistently over time.
- Practitioners can learn about what actions are needed at each nutrition transition stage, how to promote positive outcomes, and avoid negative consequences by examining trends and taking a holistic approach.

Diets in Asia are shifting

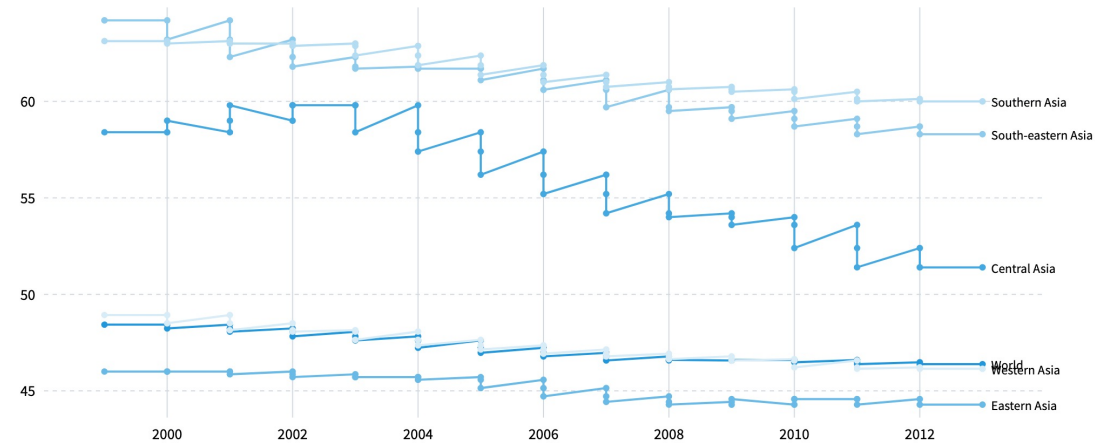
Dietary energy in the food supply (kcal/capita/day) has steadily increased since the 1960s, worldwide and in every subregion in Asia.

Dietary energy in food supply (kcal/capita/day)



Yet, the share of dietary energy from cereals, roots, and tubers (%) has decreased since 1998.

Share of dietary energy from cereals, roots, and tubers (%)

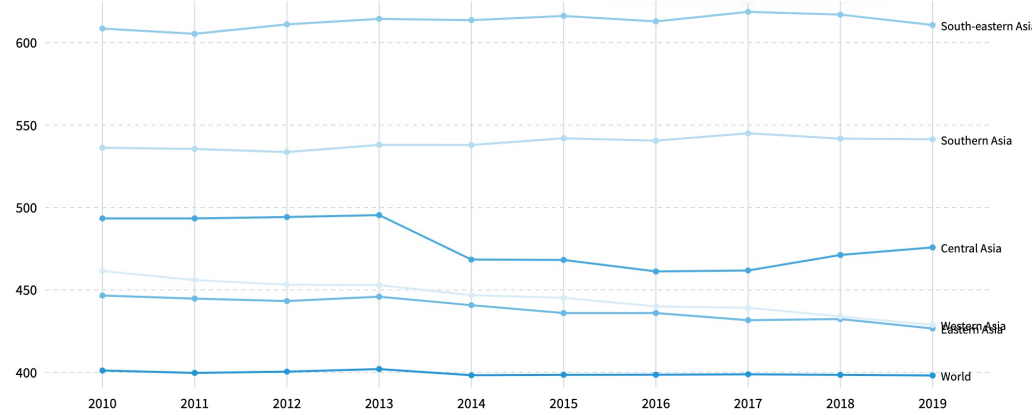


This suggests that the additional energy in the food supply is not from cereals, roots, and tubers but from other sources.

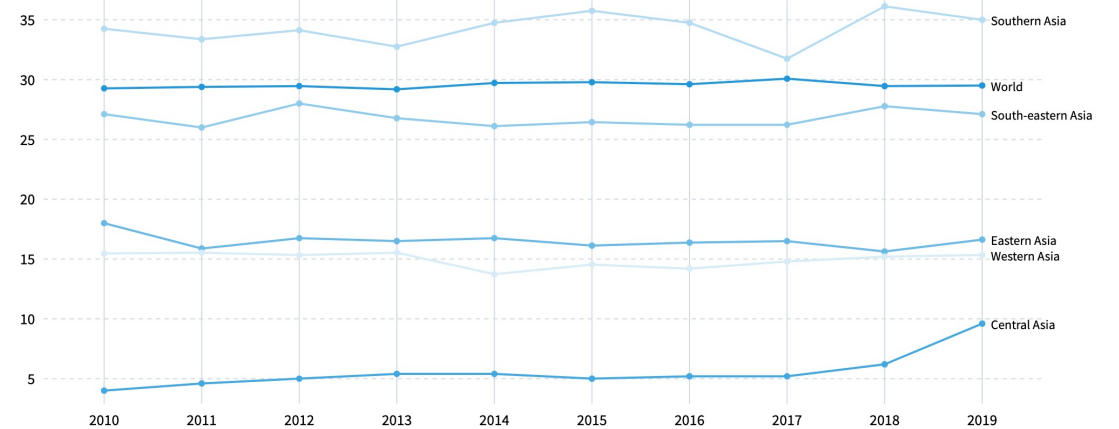


The supply of some nutritious food groups has remained relatively steady over time, though regional variations exist

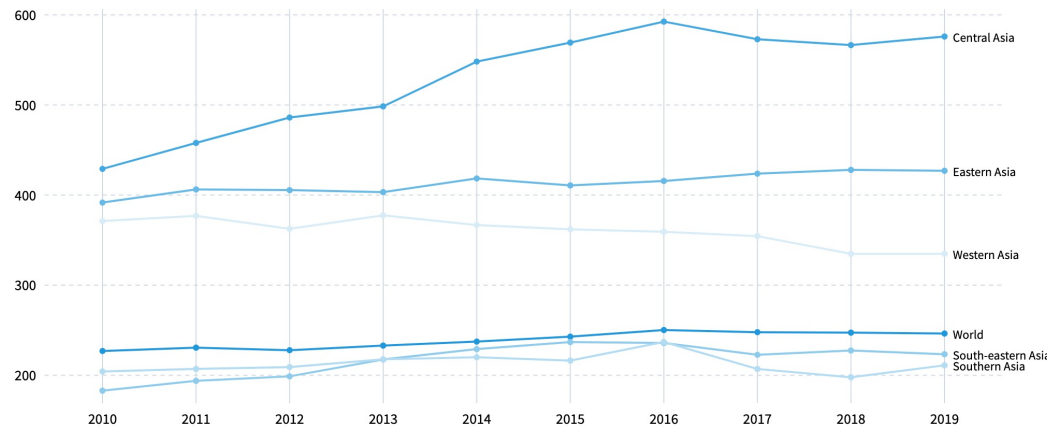
Supply of cereals (grams/capita/day)



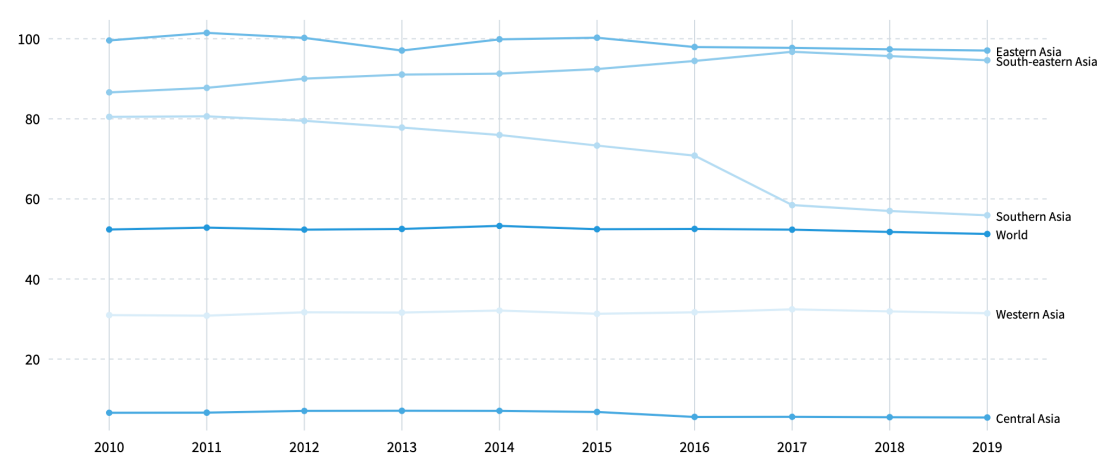
Supply of nuts and seeds (grams/capita/day)



Supply of vegetables (g/capita/day)



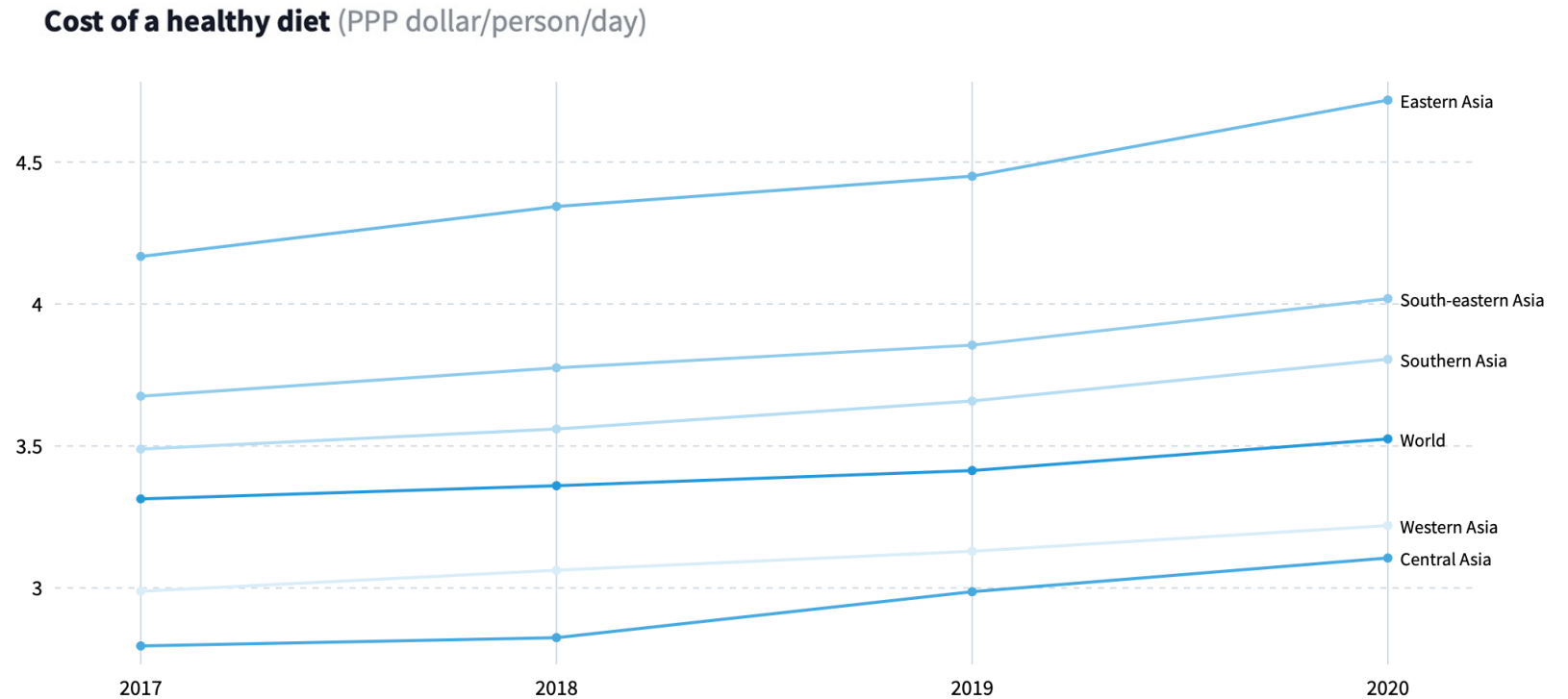
Supply of fish (g/capita/day)



What other clues can the FSD provide on why diets are changing?

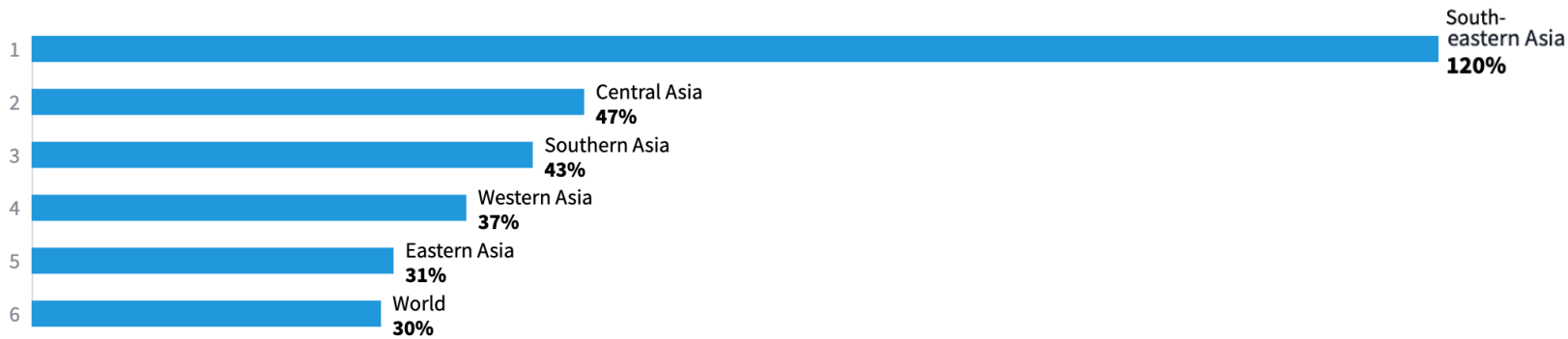
The cost of a healthy diet (PPP dollar/person/day) has been steadily increasing. Three of Asia's subregions are above the global average cost, while two are below.

- This means a diet composed of diverse and nutrient-rich foods is largely out of reach for many people. Instead, people may be consuming more affordable or convenient foods in greater proportions.



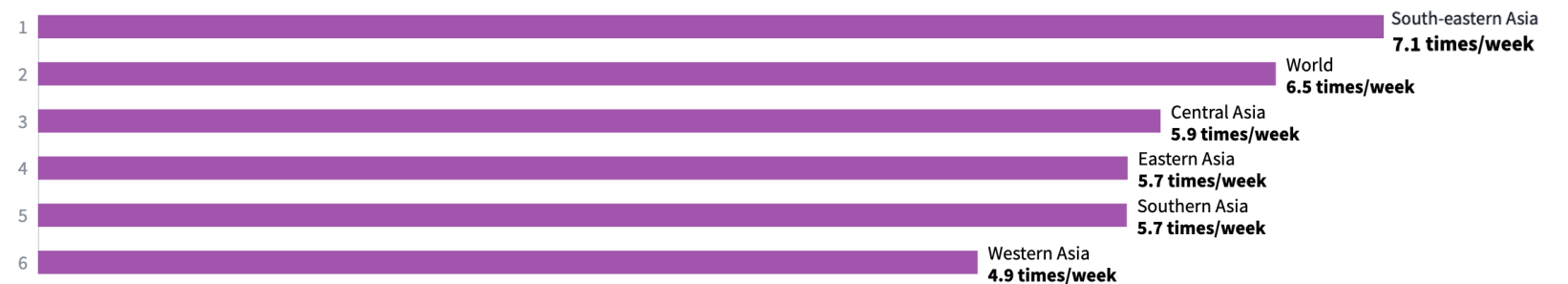
Growth in the number of supermarkets from 2012–2017 was higher in each Asian subregion than the global rate...

Growth in number of supermarkets, 5 years (2012-2017) (%)



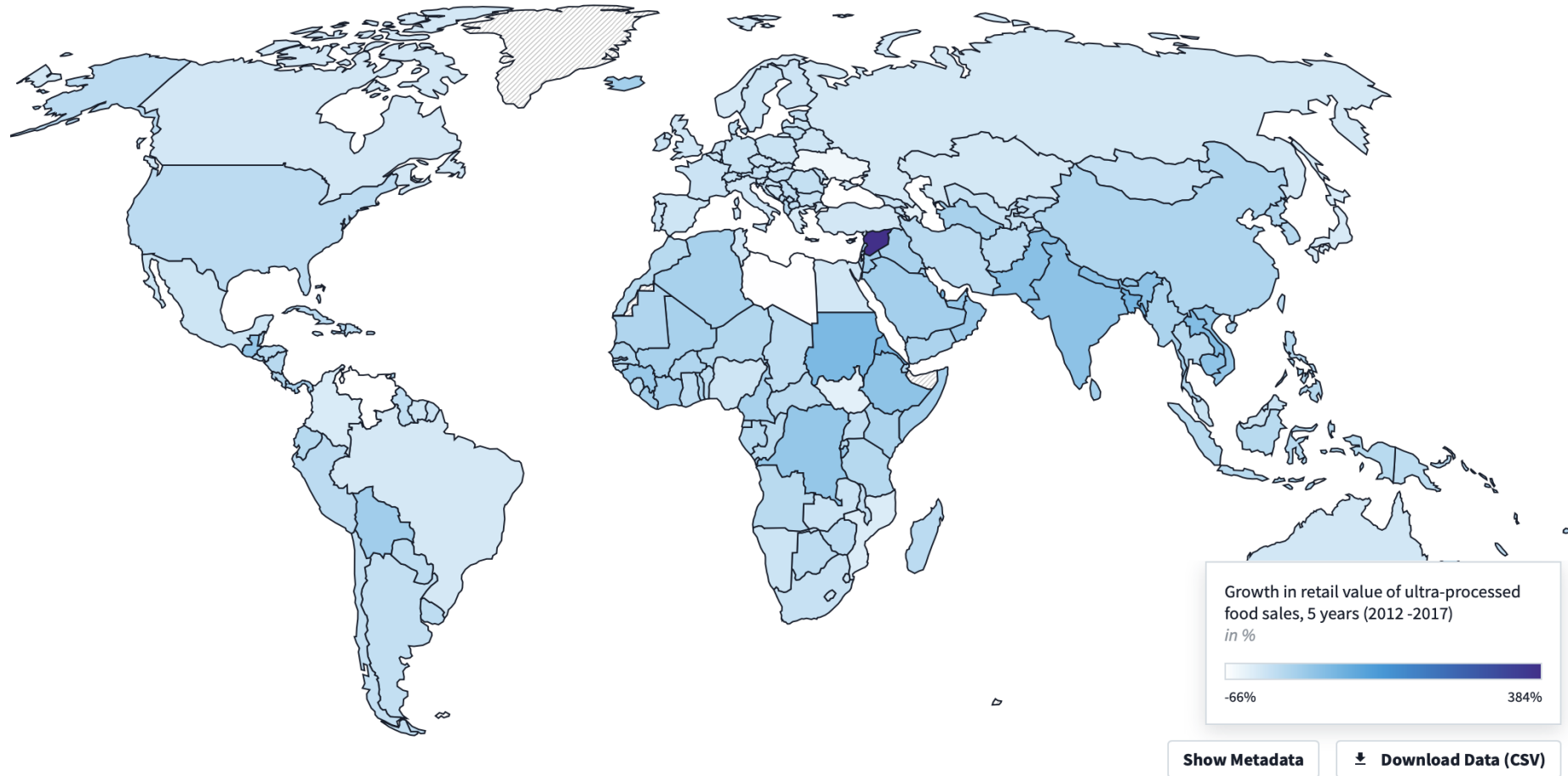
...though a lower average number of meals are reportedly cooked at home in nearly every Asian subregion (vs. the global average).

Average number of meals (lunch + dinner) cooked per week





There was marked growth in the retail value of ultra-processed food sales between 2012 and 2017

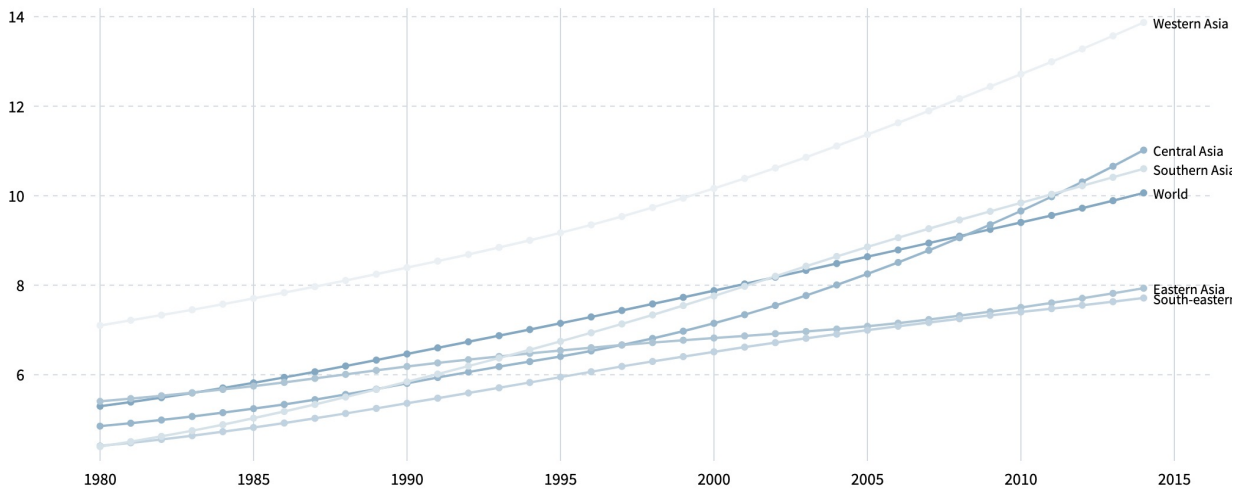


Diet-related NCDs have increased alongside changes to the region's food systems

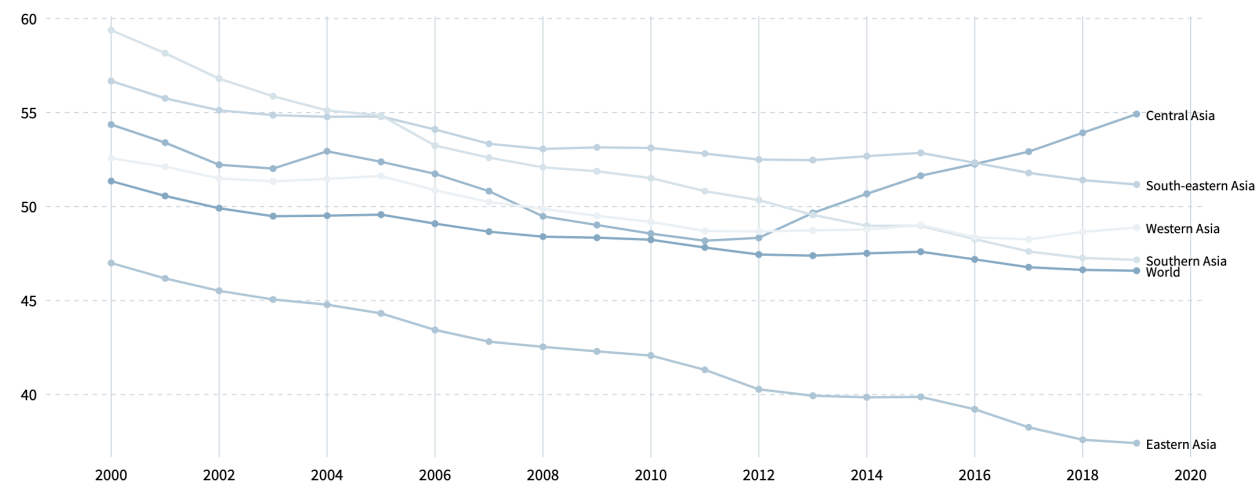
Adult diabetes prevalence (%) is increasing at a staggering rate in some Asian subregions

Percent of NCD deaths that are premature is slowly decreasing worldwide but remains higher than the global average in all subregions except Eastern Asia. In Central Asia, it has risen dramatically in the last 10 years.

Adult diabetes prevalence (%)



Percent of noncommunicable disease deaths that are premature (%)

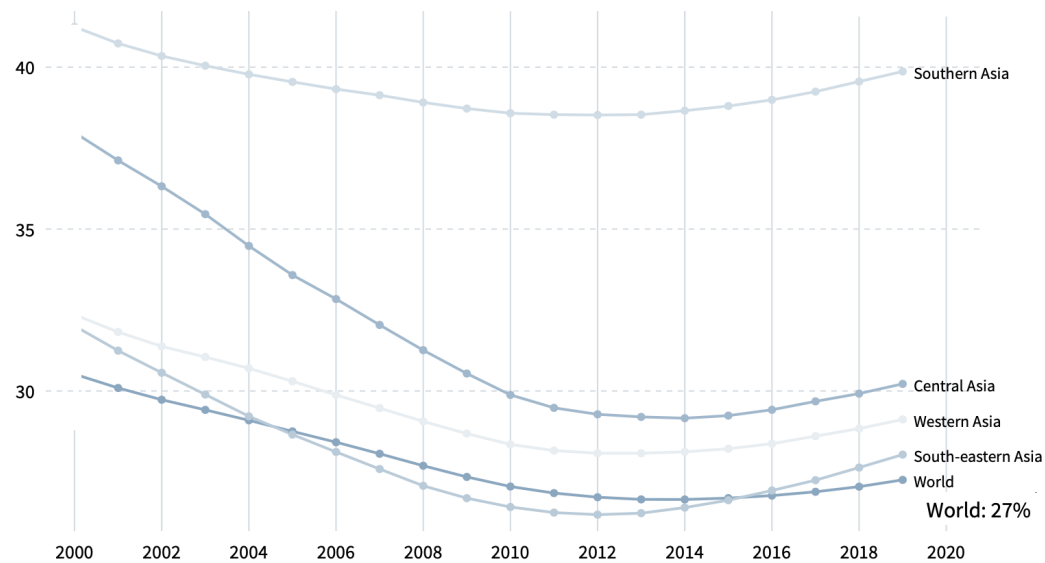


This data suggest that intake of excess calories may be a challenge in the region.

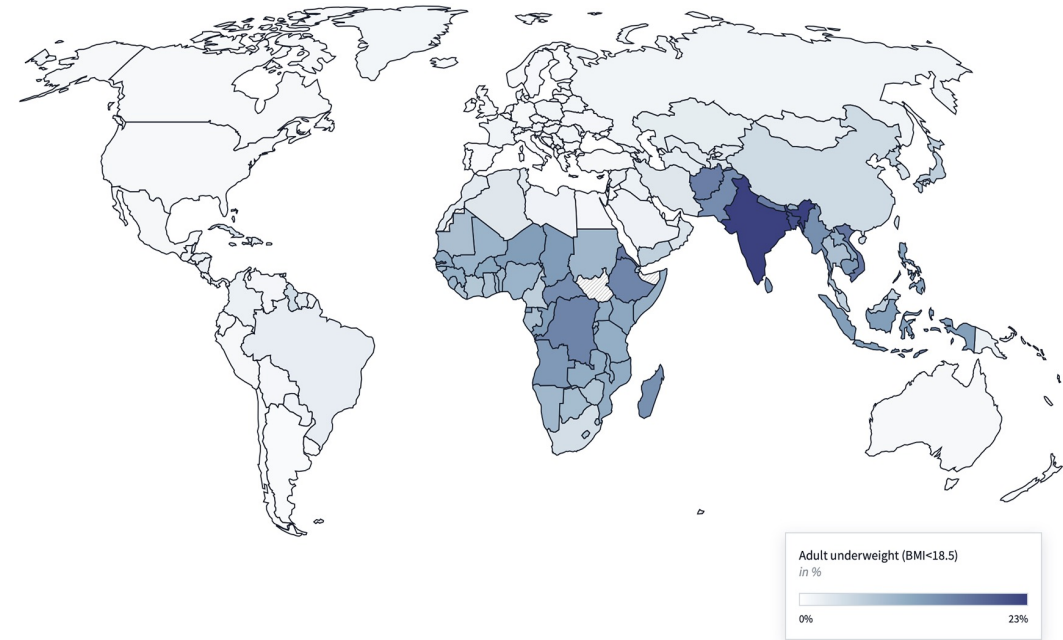
Yet undernutrition also persists, coexisting with a high burden of NCDs

Anemia in women 15-49 years of age (%) remains higher in most of Asia than the world

Anemia in women 15-49 years (%)



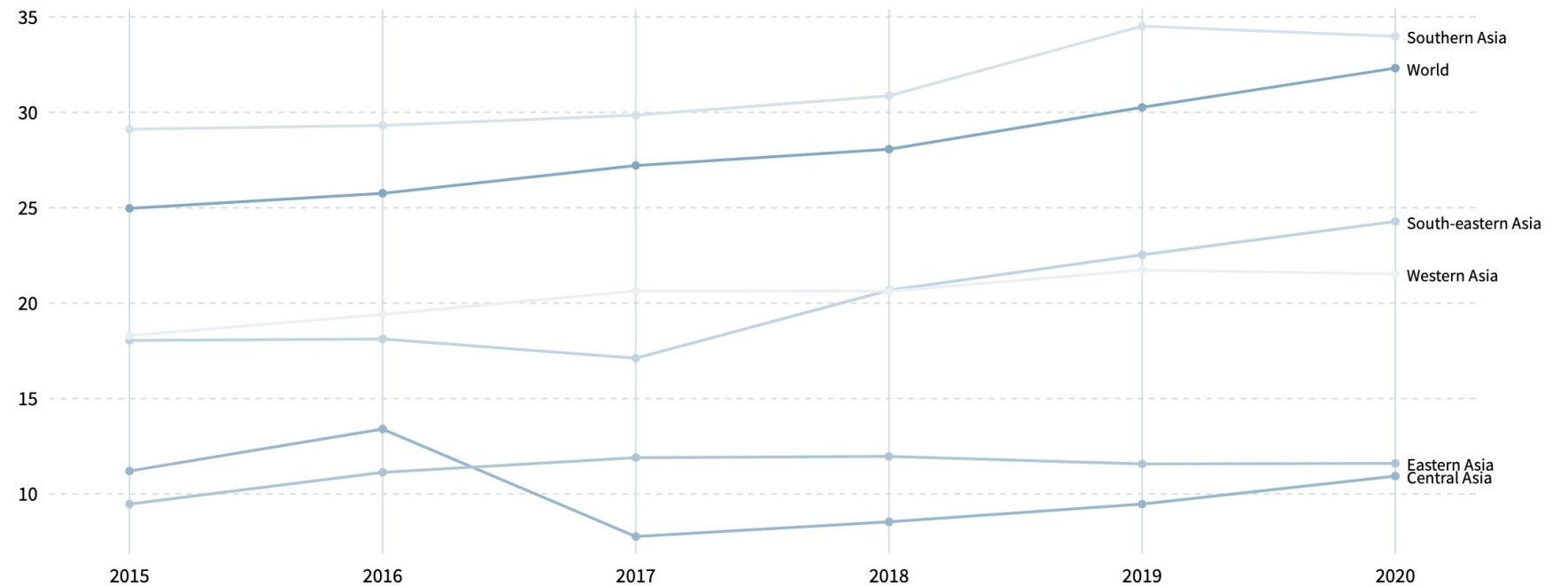
Adult underweight (BMI <18.5) is high in Southern and South-eastern Asia



The prevalence of moderate or severe food insecurity (%) is higher than the global average in Southern Asia

While the Southern Asia subregion continues to experience higher than global average food insecurity, all other subregions are considerably lower.

Prevalence of moderate or severe food insecurity (%)





Key Messages and Recommendations

Key Messages

- Shifts in diets across Asia can be attributed to many factors, including:
 - increased dietary energy in the food supply without a corresponding increase in the supply of nutrient-dense foods
 - an increase in the cost of a healthy diet
 - a decrease in cooking at home, despite an increase in the number of supermarkets
 - a reliance on widely available, unhealthy ultra-processed foods

Recommendations

- Efforts should be made to increase availability and affordability of foods that improve undernutrition and protect against NCDs (e.g., fruits, vegetables, whole grains, legumes, nuts, and seeds).
- Taxes on sugar-sweetened beverages and ultra-processed foods could help curb the increase in their consumption.
- Companies, restaurants, and other vendors should be encouraged to add healthy options for street foods and fast foods.