

DATA AT A GLANCE

World's Top Countries in Agricultural Land Expansion

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We often receive reports after reports of countries losing acres of agricultural land, defined as a fraction of the total national land area that is arable, under permanent crops, and under permanent pastures. Rarely that we hear or read reports about countries where parcels of national agricultural land are increasing rather than diminishing. Indeed, how many countries throughout the world had had agricultural land expansion from 1960 to 2016, and which countries were in the top 10? Using the World Bank (2019) data set on the agricultural land of 186 countries, we uncovered the answers.

Of the 186 countries included in the analysis, we found that 60.2% (n=112) had expanded their agricultural land during the period; in contrast, 36.6% (n=68) had a decrease while 3.2% (n=6) had neither growth nor any decrement.

Table 1 shows the countries with the largest increments in agricultural land expansion (range: 89.7% to 179.7%). Malaysia tops the list with 179.7%, which means that this country had more than doubled its agricultural land from 1960 to 2016, followed by Benin (160.1%), Papua New Guinea (140.4%), and other emerging economies (e.g., Vietnam). The underlying factors for agricultural expansion in each of the countries mentioned in the table are unclear. However, the general literature tends to suggest that these factors are very much related to intertwining issues on population, economy, conflict, security, energy, environment, and governance. The rest of the

world can learn so much from the experience of the countries in the list, such as that involving the inputs and processes utilized for as well as the impacts of agricultural land expansion.

Table 1

World's Top 10 Countries in Agricultural Land Expansion, 1960–2016

Countries	Percent Change
1. Malaysia	179.7
2. Benin	160.1
3. Papua New Guinea	140.4
4. Suriname	112.2
5. Paraguay	110.2
6. Vietnam	103.2
7. Belize	102.5
8. Saudi Arabia	101.5
9. Solomon Islands	96.4
10. Thailand	89.7

Reference

World Bank. (2019). *Agricultural land (% of land area)*. <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/AG.LND.AGRI.ZS>

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Decreasing Number of Internally Displaced Persons in the World, But Growth Trajectories Across Countries Are Mixed

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The prevailing public perception is that the number of internally displaced persons (IDP)—those who are forced to flee their homes or habitual residence due to conflict, violence, development projects, disasters, and climate change (www.internal-displacement.org)—has been on the rise throughout the world and across countries. What does the evidence say? The World Bank (2019) has a data set on IDP, including on new cases of displacements, at both the global and country levels. We analyzed the numbers for the world and for 67 countries (these are the only ones with both 2008 and 2018 data); the results are given in Table 1.

Data indicate that the number of IDP in the world had decreased by more than one half (55.1%) from 2008 to 2018. A closer look at the annual numbers (not in the table) suggests that the global number of IDP had been on a steady decline during the 10-year period, except in 2010 where the number had burgeoned to more than 40 million due to the unprecedented natural disasters that occurred around that year.

At the country level, as Table 1 further shows, the number of IDP had ranged from as few as 20 or 31 persons in some countries to as many as 14.9 million to 18.7 million persons in other countries across the 10-year period. The 67 countries included in the analysis were about equally divided into those with increments (n=36) and with decrements (n=31). The country-level increases in IDP were found to have ranged from 6.35% to 49,900%, whereas the decreases from -18.2% to -99.9%. Afghanistan, Indonesia, Somalia, Tanzania, and Uganda had the most notable increases, whereas

Algeria, Benin, Chile, China, Cuba, and Pakistan had the most significant decreases. IDP data are indicative of social inequality and require urgent action from the government and the private sector.

Table 1

Numbers of Internally Displaced Persons in the World and 67 Countries, and Percent Change, 2008–2018

	2008	2018	Percent Change
Absolute number of IDP in the world	38,241,123	17,183,614	-55.1
Absolute numbers of IDP in 67 countries (range)	20 to 18.7 million	31 to 14.9 million	
% increase in 36 countries	–	–	6.35 to 49,900
% decrease in 31 countries	–	–	-18.2 to -99.9

Reference

World Bank. (2019). *Internally displaced persons, new displacement associated with disasters (number of cases)*. <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/VC.IDP.NWDS>