Background: The FNRI-DOST updates the nutritional status of Filipino children, based on anthropometric indicators, every two to three years, to provide empirical data to program planners and policy makers on the progress of the country’s efforts to curb malnutrition. The 2001 updating of the nutritional status of Filipino children, coming at the start of the new millennium, provides the benchmarks by which to gauge the country’s achievements towards the Millennium Development Goals, which include the eradication of undernutrition among the children. Objectives: To assess the nutritional status of 0-10 year-old children using anthropometric indices; To examine the trend in the nutritional status of Filipino children from 1989-90 to 2001. Methods: A nationwide survey was carried out, among a total of 10,634 children, 0-5 years old, and 1,791 children, 6-10 years of age. A two-stage sampling design was employed, with the barangays and the children as the primary and secondary sampling units, respectively. The children’s weight and height/recumbent length were measured using standard procedures, and their nutritional status were determined using the WHO/NCHS or International Reference Standards. Results: Among the preschool-age children, prevalence underweight was 30.6%, underheight was 31.4%, thinness was 6.3% and overweight was 1.0%. Higher prevalences of underweight and underheight among school-age children at 32.9% and 41.1%, respectively, were noted. Compared with the survey done in 1998, the problems of underweight and underheight among the 0-5 year-old children, both reflecting long-standing nutritional status, appeared to have tapered; but thinness, which is indicative of the current state of nutrition, increased. Among the 6-10 year-old children, there was a general increase in the prevalence rates of underweight, underheight and overweight. The proportion of overweight preschool- and school-age children also increased between 1998 and 2001. All forms of malnutrition were most prevalent among the younger group of 1-2 year-old preschoolers. There were no gender differences among the preschool-age children but the school-age boys were more at-risk to all the three forms of malnutrition than the girls. Among regions, Bicol appeared to be the worst-off in underweight prevalence, the ARMM for underheight and Cagayan Valley for the prevalence of thinness. From 1989-90 to 2001, underweight and underheight prevalence rates among the 0-5 year-old children decreased by 3.9 and 8.5 percentage points, respectively. Among the school-age children, a downtrend was also noted, although with smaller reduction in percentage points than that among the preschool-age children. Conclusion: Malnutrition continues to persist among Filipino children. Although there were modest gains from 1989-90 to 2001, or between 1998 to 2001, the improvements have been slow. The situation calls for more vigorous and sustainable programs to promote the growth and
development of children, and a renewed focus on policies and programs that address acute as well as chronic undernutrition among children.

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