

Feeding the Future: Food Security for Peace and Prosperity

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Nearly a billion people in the world go hungry on a daily basis. The global population is expected to increase to exceed nine billion by 2050, requiring a 60 percent increase in food production. The consequences are undeniable. Already, undernutrition contributes to the deaths of 2.6 million children every year, and is responsible for a third of all deaths of children under the age of five. An inadequate diet during critical windows of development can cost survivors up to ten percent of their lifetime earnings due to decreased cognitive and physical capacity, and the problem can cost countries up to two to three percent of their GDP annually.

And yet from 1982 to 2002, the share of overseas development assistance that was committed to agricultural development fell from 17 percent to 3.7 percent. During this same time, the number of hungry globally hovered between 800 and 900 million people, and surpassed one billion in 2008. This prompted President Obama to initiate a global effort to eliminate finally the scourge of hunger worldwide.

In response to the global food crisis in 2007-2008, the US government took swift action. In addition to providing emergency food aid, at the G-8 Summit in L'Aquila, Italy in 2009, President Obama pledged \$3.5 billion to support international agricultural development to improve long term food security. The G-8, other donors, and international organizations agreed under the L'Aquila Food Security Initiative to commit to a set of principles meant to change the way we do business in agricultural development. Later that year, 193 countries embraced these ideals as the five Rome Principles for Sustainable Food Security. These principles still guide international agricultural development, and include taking a comprehensive approach toward meeting the challenges of global food insecurity, coordinating more effectively between donors, civil society organizations, nongovernmental organizations, the private sector, and other stakeholders, supporting country-owned processes and plans, strengthening engagement with multilateral institutions and delivering on sustained commitments, and encouraging mutual accountability.

President Obama's \$3.5 billion pledge leveraged an additional \$18.5 billion in pledges from G-8 and international partners both at L'Aquila and later at the G-20 summit, resulting in over \$22 billion in public sector financing for agricultural development. This achievement reversed decades of decline in official development assistance in the agriculture sector. Part of this financing flows through the G-20-created Global Agriculture and Food Security Program (GAFSP) trust fund, housed at the World Bank. GAFSP so far has received \$775 million in funds from donors, and has committed funds totaling \$658 million to specific projects in 18 eligible countries.

The \$3.5 billion US pledge served as the foundation for Feed the Future, the US government's global hunger and food security initiative, and is a pledge to work with partner countries, development partners and other stakeholders to tackle global food security challenges.

Global food security investments aim to recapture the effort and impact that characterized the Green Revolution of a half-century ago. The development of modern agricultural technology by Dr. Norman Borlaug's pioneering research from the 1940s through the 1970s inspired the Green Revolution in Asia and Latin America, and is widely credited with saving a billion people from starvation. Unfortunately, after this, donor countries' investments in agricultural development plummeted. Famines and chronic undernutrition in many places in Africa and elsewhere are a persistent reminder that much more work remains to be done.

Feed the Future takes a whole-of-government approach to global development that combines the expertise and resources of many US government agencies supporting country-driven approaches to address the root causes of hunger and poverty. Through this Presidential initiative, the United States is helping countries transform their own agriculture sectors to grow enough food to feed their people sustainably and support strong economic growth through sales and exports. This way, valuable food aid can be used for unforeseen catastrophes rather than for chronic food insecurity or predictable cycles of drought or flooding.

Investing in food security is not only the right thing to do, but the smart thing to do. The food security of foreign nations is increasingly linked to our national security. Vice President Biden explained in October 2011, "[We] made food security a priority because it enhances our national security and the stability of the international system...Investments made to ward off food insecurity and prevent its recurrence can prevent the vicious cycles of rising extremism, armed conflict and state failure than [sic] can require far larger commitments of resources down the road."

Hunger is not caused exclusively by failed agricultural systems, nor is it solved solely through agricultural development. Food security requires that food supplies are available, accessible, stable and able to be utilized by an individual. To support all four conditions, Feed the Future invests across entire agricultural value chains, funding research to develop higher quality seeds, creating markets for farmers to sell their products, developing infrastructure so people can get to those markets, and raising rural incomes so families can buy the nutritious foods they need to lead healthy and productive lives.

Similarly, reducing child undernutrition is not solved by focusing exclusively on agricultural growth, nor on growth in other single sectors. Nutrition investments must be accompanied by strategic investments in complementary sectors including health, education, trade and infrastructure. They also must be targeted—especially to women of child-bearing age, to ensure that they and their children receive adequate nutrition during the 1,000 days from pregnancy to a child's second birthday. During this critical window of development, adequate nutrition has the greatest impact on developing a child's cognitive

and physical capacity. Nutrient deficiencies during this period can result in a loss of up to 15 IQ points and permanently stunted growth; nutrition interventions after this 1,000 day window are substantially less effective.

For this reason, in 2010, Secretary Clinton launched the “1,000 Days” partnership to elevate the issue of early life nutrition amongst policymakers worldwide while simultaneously issuing a 1,000 day challenge to the global community to make significant progress against measurable nutrition targets within that timeframe. 1,000 Days also supports the global Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) movement. SUN brings together governments and organizations to work together to fight hunger and undernutrition.

But governments and institutions cannot be effective independently. The private sector can bring innovation to scale and foster accelerated agricultural productivity as well as develop more nutritious foods that are accessible to the poor. To engage the private sector in agricultural development, the United States and G-8 partners launched the New Alliance for Food Security and Nutrition at the G-8 Summit in May this year. The New Alliance is a commitment by G-8 and African government partners to lift 50 million people out of poverty over the next ten years, with an increased focus on mobilizing private investment and activity in African agriculture. More than 45 international and African companies and private sector partners pledged to invest three billion dollars to spur progress toward this goal.

We are indeed making progress. Already, Feed the Future investments are helping individuals, communities and governments take steps toward the broader goal of reducing poverty and improving nutrition. By May this year, Feed the Future investments helped 1.8 million food producers adopt improved technologies or management practices that lead to more resilient crops, higher yields and increased incomes. Women farmers in particular are benefitting through programs addressing many of the constraints that keep them from fulfilling their potential as providers for their families, including access to land in Tanzania and Ghana, irrigation in Mali and Senegal, and technical assistance throughout most Feed the Future countries. Nearly nine million children have been benefitted from nutrition programs such as micronutrient supplementation and food fortification, anemia reduction programs, home and community gardens and the treatment of acute malnutrition.

Development does take time and the evidence of our impacts will take time to emerge. But with support from civil society, the private sector, and donor and partner governments alike, we are making progress toward ambitious goals to achieve sustainable food security.