

FOOD SECURITY IS NATIONAL SECURITY

U.S. LEADERSHIP IN GLOBAL FOOD AND WATER SECURITY



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The United States has led efforts to combat global hunger for decades. Hunger affects close to one in ten people worldwide, and, historically, American farmers have supplied an **estimated** 40% of all global food assistance. By leveraging America's abundant agricultural output, these life-saving investments in global food security have kept billions from starvation and malnourishment while promoting a safer and more prosperous America.

As Secretary of State Marco Rubio has said, **"Food security is national security."** When people cannot feed their families, desperation can lead to violence and unrest. In conflict zones like Sudan, Syria, and Central America, U.S. food assistance has promoted stability and prevented crises from spilling across borders, including our own.

America's leadership in combatting global food insecurity **strengthens our economic security**. Food security investments open critical markets for U.S. farmers and businesses and prevent food waste. In 2023, U.S. agriculture and related food industries **contributed** roughly \$1.5 trillion to U.S. gross domestic product, while employing 2.6 million Americans who produced enough surplus agricultural products to **export** \$174 billion worth of goods to international markets.

"We feed the world. We lead the world."
U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Brooke Rollins

FOOD SECURES PEACE

In 1954, President Eisenhower signed the Agricultural Trade and Development Act, which aimed to use U.S. agricultural surpluses to address growing world hunger. This lifesaving initiative, later known as Food for Peace, has fed over four billion people in more than 150 countries, from Haiti to Sudan, in times of acute hunger, conflict, or famine.

- U.S. Food for Peace has **promoted** stability and community resilience by counteracting cycles of violence and preventing the spread of disease and malnutrition, particularly among pregnant women and children under five. Every \$1 invested in strengthening communities' resilience saves \$7 in more expensive humanitarian aid, benefiting both U.S. taxpayers and America's strategic interests.
- On average, the U.S. government has **purchased** nearly \$2 billion in surplus commodities through the program, generating significant revenue for farmers and rural economies. In 2023, the U.S. **bought** over 1 million metric tons of food from American farmers for food assistance abroad.
- Emergency food aid from the U.S. **reached** over 53 million people across 21 countries and supported 3 million people in building stronger families and communities to provide for themselves in 2022.
- Our rivals, especially China, are outpacing the U.S. in international investments, which threatens America's leadership and influence. America's fastest growing markets—now representing more than 50% of U.S. exports—are in developing countries, and 95% of the world's customers live outside our borders. Our support to the International Affairs Budget is vital to America's economic competitiveness to keep us engaged with our allies at home and abroad.

FOOD FOR EDUCATION

The McGovern-Dole Food for Education and Child Nutrition Program was established in 2002 after bipartisan advocacy for its passage in Congress. Today, it stands as one of the most effective U.S. international assistance efforts, having **fed** over 44 million schoolchildren in 48 countries with 5.5 billion school meals.

- McGovern-Dole also creates significant economic opportunities for America's farmers. In 2025, it has **purchased** 56,170 metric tons of U.S. commodities, including corn, rice, beans, and soy.
- In 2023, McGovern-Dole projects **benefited** more than 4.5 million children and community members and fed daily school meals to 2.5 million food-insecure children worldwide.
- Beyond food, McGovern-Dole boosts educational outcomes by supporting school infrastructure, teacher training, and clean water access, training 24,800 teachers in 2023.
- To reduce aid dependency, McGovern-Dole has purchased nearly 13,000 metric tons of food locally in **countries** like El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras. These efforts have improved local agricultural systems, enhancing livelihoods for farmers and communities, which reduces pressure to migrate to the U.S.

AGRICULTURE INNOVATIONS

America combats food insecurity by leveraging U.S. innovation and equipping countries with the agricultural tools and systems to feed themselves. Between 2010 and 2020, targeted U.S. investments in partner agriculture systems **reduced** hunger for 5.2 million families and lifted 23.4 million individuals out of poverty.

- In 2023, America worked with 6.2 million farmers to **apply** improved agricultural practices overseas on 4.5 million hectares of cropland and cultivated pasture, close to the size of West Virginia.
- Beyond generating economic dividends, these investments in better nutrition have significantly **reduced** stunting rates in children under five, most notably a 23% decrease in Ethiopia between 2013 and 2018. This means healthier, more self-reliant populations and less long-term need for U.S. assistance.
- Partnering with U.S. universities led to breakthrough technologies to empower farmers worldwide and open markets for American agricultural technology. In some regions, the adoption of their research and technology has helped **increase** crop yields by up to 50%.
- Feed the Future Innovation Labs, established in 14 American universities, led to new innovations to fight pests, improve grain quality, and enhance sustainability—advances that are also invaluable for farmers here at home. Every \$1 **invested** in American innovation labs has resulted in an \$8 return in investment for U.S. taxpayers.

CLEAN WATER, SANITATION, AND HYGIENE

Billions of people worldwide **lack** access to essential water, sanitation, and hygiene services (WASH). An **estimated** 13 percent of mortality in children under five globally is traced to inadequate WASH systems. In conflict zones, children are 20 times more likely to die from diarrhea than from the violence itself. Two key laws govern U.S. support to WASH systems worldwide: the 2005 Water for Poor Act and the 2014 Water for the World Act.

- U.S. investments in WASH infrastructure have helped **enable** 961 million people to gain access to safely managed drinking water over the past decade. These efforts help curb mortality rates and mitigate the spread of infectious diseases that otherwise hold back economic development and trade.
- In 2023, the U.S. Development Finance Corporation **invested** in the Water Access Acceleration Fund, the first private equity fund for safe drinking water, with the goal of providing clean water access to 30 million people.

SEAFOOD SECURITY

According to the **National Seafood Strategy**, the U.S. harvests about 10 billion pounds of seafood annually that contribute to a \$165 billion domestic seafood market and employ 1.2 million Americans. Meanwhile, illegal, unregulated, and unreported (IUU) fishing threatens the global seafood market, **causing** an estimated \$10 billion to \$24 billion in **losses** annually. It directly harms the U.S. by undercutting American fishermen, exposing U.S. consumers to unsafe products, and expanding the influence of adversaries such as Russia and China.

- U.S. investments—including in the Pacific Islands and Latin America—reinforce efforts like the Port State Measures Agreement (PSMA), a 2016 treaty that blocks IUU fishing vessels from using the ports of signatory countries. These efforts **help** keep illegal seafood out of U.S. supply chains, protect American fishing jobs, and promote safer international markets.
- Rivals, including China and Russia, **poach** millions of tons of seafood annually near Alaska and the Gulf Coast. China has the world's **largest** state-subsidized fishing fleet, and its vessels are often **found** engaging in IUU fishing in the waters of other nations, from the Philippines to partners like Argentina, Chile, and Ecuador.
- Key to countering IUU and maritime trafficking is collaborating with U.S. partners to improve maritime domain awareness and law enforcement, including \$55 million in recent State Department **funding** to Indo-Pacific partners to protect sovereign fishing rights and promote reliable shipping lanes for American businesses.