

FOOD SECURITY IS NATIONAL SECURITY

U.S. LEADERSHIP IN GLOBAL FOOD AND WATER SECURITY



JUNE 2026

With hunger affecting close to one in twelve people [worldwide](#), America's leadership in promoting global food security has led to a safer, stronger world. American farmers have played a key role, supplying an [estimated](#) 40% of all global food assistance. As U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Brooke Rollins has said, "We feed the world. We lead the world."

U.S. international food assistance is closely tied to U.S. national and economic security. In the previous appropriations cycle, Members of Congress voted on a broad, bipartisan basis to sustain international food assistance programs, and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and Department of State leadership have repeatedly emphasized the strategic imperative of these programs in feeding the world's hungry and expanding U.S. economic opportunities, which support farming communities at home.

MAKING AMERICA SAFER

As Secretary of State Marco Rubio has said, "food security is national security." Hungry people become desperate—and this desperation can ultimately lead to displacement, forced migration, and even violence. Hunger and malnutrition leave people more vulnerable to infectious diseases that can easily cross borders. In fact, a 25 percent rise in food insecurity has been [found](#) to increase the risk of conflict by 36 percent.

Longstanding food assistance programs, such as Food for Peace and the McGovern-Dole Food for Education and Child Nutrition Program directly combat these problems by [promoting](#) stability, community resilience, and nutrition, particularly among pregnant women and children, putting countries on the road to self-reliance. For these programs to succeed as intended, the U.S. should retain its strategic focus on developing countries.

- **Sudan:** As Sudan's civil war enters its fourth year, 19 million people—nearly two in five Sudanese—are [experiencing](#) acute food insecurity, leading the World Food Programme to term Sudan "the world's largest hunger crisis in recent history." As the U.S. supports peace efforts in Sudan, the U.S. government has also provided emergency food assistance, [including](#) \$20 million in March. With much of the country's infrastructure destroyed, this aid is critical in combatting hunger and deterring disease outbreaks and broader instability that affects U.S. interests in a chronically food insecure region.

MAKING AMERICA MORE PROSPEROUS

America's leadership in combatting global food insecurity strengthens our economic security. As the government looks to farmers to supply food to communities in desperate need, U.S. international food assistance programs also provide a reliable market for surplus agricultural commodities. For instance, through Food for Peace, the U.S. government [purchases](#) close to \$2 billion worth of surplus commodities from American farmers each year.

Over the last 25 years, U.S. agricultural exports have grown steadily, [reaching](#) \$176 billion in 2024 and supporting millions of jobs. Notably, many of the top 25 U.S. agricultural export [destinations](#) are either current or former recipients of U.S. food assistance, reflecting the role of food security cooperation in shaping trade relationships.

- **South Korea:** After the Korean War, the devastated Republic of Korea became an early test case for Food for Peace. In the war's aftermath, Food for Peace [delivered](#) meals to millions of schoolchildren to combat malnutrition, followed by [shipments](#) of surplus agricultural products like corn, wheat, and rice. Thanks in part to years of U.S. food assistance, South Korea underwent an economic transformation to become the fifth largest [importer](#) of U.S. agricultural goods and a key ally today.
- **Honduras:** As a significant [destination](#) for U.S. agricultural exports, and one of the fastest growing [markets](#) in Latin America, USDA has sought to expand agricultural ties with Honduras. In 2026, Honduras was [designated](#) a "priority country" for funding through McGovern-Dole, which leverages surplus food commodities to provide critical school meals to vulnerable communities.

Alongside traditional food assistance programs, the State Department has also prioritized combatting illegal, unregulated, and unreported (IUU) fishing, which threatens the global seafood market, [causing](#) an estimated \$10 to \$24 billion in [losses](#) annually. As rivals like Russia and China [poach](#) millions of tons of seafood annually near American and partner nation coastlines, recent U.S. government [investments](#) in maritime security aim to keep illegal seafood out of U.S. supply chains, protecting U.S. fishing jobs and promoting safer international markets.

HARNESSING U.S. AGRICULTURAL INNOVATION

America has been a powerhouse in agricultural research and innovation—particularly through innovation labs at U.S. land-grant universities—which have strengthened agricultural productivity, crop resilience, and economic opportunities not only for communities abroad, but also American farmers, producers, and consumers. Every \$1 [invested](#) in these labs has resulted in an \$8 return in investment for U.S. taxpayers.

- **Kansas State University's Innovation Lab for Climate Resilient Cereals (CRCIL):** CRCIL [conducts](#) research into varieties of wheat, sorghum, millet, and rice that are high-yield and pest, heat, and drought resistant. Funded by both public and private dollars, CRCIL aims to double the world's food supply by 2050 by improving varieties of crops that are commonly grown in the U.S. and abroad.

International collaboration—including through global agricultural partnerships like the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) has been [vital](#) to U.S. research labs and organizations. With U.S. government support, decades of cooperation have led to the exchange of knowledge and technology, partner capacity strengthening, trade reforms, and new markets for U.S. products. This work has also been pivotal to better monitoring and preventing pests and disease outbreaks before they reach America's farms.

- **International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center (CIMMYT):** As one of CGIAR's research centers, [CIMMYT](#) has led global breeding efforts for wheat and maize for decades. These programs frequently share seed varieties with U.S. public and private breeders. In fact, [60% of wheat grown](#) in the U.S. comes from CGIAR-developed varieties, and in February 2026, the U.S. government announced a [\\$40 million grant](#) to CIMMYT to keep them based in North America after the Chinese government had offered funding to relocate CIMMYT to China.

DEMONSTRATING AMERICAN VALUES AND SAVING LIVES

U.S. leadership through our premier food assistance and water security programs has saved millions of lives and averted malnutrition around the world—all while encouraging market-based solutions in line with American values and generosity.

- **Food for Peace:** Since 1954, 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. In 2023 alone, food assistance under the program [reached](#) over 45 million people across 35 countries and supported many more in strengthening self-reliant communities.
- **McGovern-Dole Food for Education:** Overseen by USDA, this program has not only been critical in preventing food waste, but also in improving health, nutrition, and educational outcomes. McGovern-Dole represents 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.
- **Ready-To-Use Therapeutic Foods (RUTFs):** RUTFs, a staple in U.S. humanitarian programs, are a nutrient-dense [paste](#) used for children suffering from severe acute malnutrition. Requiring no cooking and having a shelf life of two years without added water or refrigeration, RUTFs are highly effective, with nine out of ten children recovering after a few weeks of treatment. In 2024, RUTFs [reached](#) 9.4 million children worldwide, saving millions of lives.
- **Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH):** Billions of people worldwide [lack](#) access to WASH services, with more than 1,300 children under five [dying](#) every day from diseases caused by unsafe drinking water and poor sanitation. Over the last decade, U.S. investments in water security, including through the 2014 Water for the World Act and the U.S. Development Finance Corporation's [Water Access Acceleration Fund](#), have [enabled](#) 961 million people to gain access to safely managed drinking water.