FOOD SECURITY IS NATIONAL SECURITY

U.S. LEADERSHIP IN GLOBAL FOOD SECURITY

U.S. GLOBAL LEADERSHIP COALITION

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With hunger affecting close to one in twelve people worldwide, America's leadership in promoting global food security leads to a safer, stronger world. American farmers play 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. Members of Congress vote consistently 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 to feed the world's hungry and expand U.S. economic opportunities, all while supporting American farmers.

MAKING AMERICA SAFER

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

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.

- **Sudan:** As Sudan's civil war enters its fourth year, 19 million people—nearly two in five Sudanese—are experiencing acute food insecurity, making it "the world's largest hunger crisis in recent history." Alongside peace efforts, the U.S. government has provided emergency food assistance, including $20 million in March and an additional $235 million in July in partnership with Catholic Relief Services. With much of Sudan's infrastructure destroyed, this aid is critical to combat hunger and deter disease outbreaks and broader instability that affect U.S. interests.

MAKING AMERICA MORE PROSPEROUS

America's leadership in combatting global food insecurity strengthens our economic security. American farmers have a reliable market for surplus agricultural commodities as they provide food to communities in desperate need through U.S. international food assistance programs. For instance, through Food for Peace, close to $2 billion worth of surplus commodities is purchased 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, 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 U.S. food assistance, South Korea underwent an economic transformation and today is the fifth largest importer of U.S. agricultural goods and a key ally.
- **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.

The State Department has also prioritized combatting illegal, unregulated, and unreported (IUU) fishing, which causes an estimated $10 to $24 billion in losses annually to the global seafood market. As rivals like Russia and China poach millions of tons of seafood annually near American and partner nation coastlines, investments in maritime security keep illegal seafood out of U.S. supply chains, protecting U.S. fishing jobs and promoting safer international markets.

HARNESSING U.S. AGRICULTURAL INNOVATION

Innovation labs at U.S. land-grant universities make America a powerhouse in agricultural research. These labs strengthen 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)** 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.

The lab network includes programs at Washington State University on animal health and veterinary vaccine development, Mississippi State University on fisheries, and the University of Georgia on peanut production.

International collaboration—including through global agricultural partnerships like the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) is vital to U.S. research labs and organizations. 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) 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 offered funding to relocate 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 2023 alone, the program reached over 45 million people across 35 countries and helped strengthen self-reliant communities.
- **McGovern-Dole Food for Education**: This USDA program has been critical in improving the health, nutrition, and educational outcomes of children and families worldwide. Over the years, McGovern-Dole has fed over 44 million schoolchildren in 48 countries with 5.5 billion school meals.
- **Ready-To-Use Therapeutic Foods (RUTFs)**: RUTFs are a nutrient-dense paste 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.
- **Specialized Nutritious Foods (SNFs)**: SNFs encompass a range of nutrient-dense foods designed to prevent and treat various stages of malnutrition, including super cereals, Ready-To-Use Supplementary Foods (RUSFs), and RUTFs.
- **Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH)**: Over 1,300 children under five die daily from unsafe drinking water and poor sanitation. Over the last decade, U.S. investments, including the 2014 Water for the World Act and the U.S. Development Finance Corporation's Water Access Acceleration Fund, have provided 961 million people with safely managed drinking water.