



Groups Welcome the Release of Administration Proposal for International Food Aid Reform

Washington, DC, February 26, 2013 - The above groups welcome reports that the Administration may propose helpful reforms to the U.S. food assistance program in its FY2014 budget submission to Congress. We urge the Obama Administration to include a bold reform proposal that builds upon the United States' historic leadership as the world's most generous donor of food aid.

When 870 million people around the world go hungry every day, making every food aid dollar count is not only a responsible use of taxpayer money, it is a moral imperative. For that reason, it is critical that any reforms seek efficiencies rather than cuts, and do not alter the basic programmatic focus of the U.S. food aid program. These programs help to feed 55 million people in need around the world, supporting both emergency responses and addressing chronic hunger.

Our organizations strongly support effective foreign assistance to address humanitarian crises and development challenges. We know from our work on the ground that this aid saves lives. That is why we have advocated for common sense reforms to our outdated food aid system that would allow the United States to continue providing life-saving assistance for millions of people around the world, even in this period of a constrained federal budget.

Making every dollar count for hungry people means adding flexibility to our overseas food assistance so that proven methods such as local and regional purchase (LRP) are part of the food aid toolbox. The recent release of an independent evaluation report of the USDA LRP Pilot Program, established under a provision of the 2008 farm bill, confirms that this approach is a triple win: providing considerable cost savings, faster humanitarian response, and support for the local farmers and agricultural markets that are the key to providing long-term global food security.

Making every dollar count for hungry people also means reducing the inefficient and potentially market distorting practice of selling U.S. commodities to fund non-food components of programs designed to support agriculture, nutrition and food security. It would be far more efficient to fund these activities directly, instead of through circuitous and inefficient route of monetizing food aid.

In a June 2011 report, the Government Accountability Office found that the use of monetization resulted in at least a 30 percent loss of resources to non-emergency food aid projects conducted from 2008-2010.

In the current budgetary climate, policymakers cannot afford to ignore any credible proposal to maximize the use of taxpayer dollars while maintaining and even increasing program reach and impact. Our organizations stand ready to work with the Administration and Congress to reform our international food aid system so that we can continue to respond to the scourge of global hunger today and build toward a hunger-free future tomorrow.