



50 F Street, N.W. ♦ Suite 900 ♦ Washington, DC ♦ 20001
Phn 1-202-879-0835 ♦ Fax 1-202-626-8899

Contact: Ellen Levinson
Executive Director
1(202) 879-0835
elevinson@elevinson.com

NOT THE TIME TO RETREAT FROM THE FIGHT AGAINST HUNGER

Washington, DC., February 10, 2011-- The Alliance for Global Food Security urges the House of Representatives to reconsider its proposed \$544 million cut in international food assistance programs. Ellen Levinson, Alliance Executive Director, explained, “Reduced funding would set back efforts in low-income, food insecure countries to increase productivity and incomes in the agricultural sector, to reduce vulnerability to food crises, and to improve nutrition and incomes of the poor. It would be particularly devastating now, because food prices have soared to their highest levels in decades and low-income, food deficit countries are struggling with growing hunger and unrest.”

In a letter to congressional appropriations committees, the Alliance, which is comprised of humanitarian and development organizations that conduct programs in over 100 low-income countries, urged Congress to provide the funding requested by the Obama Administration for FY 2011 for the Food for Peace and McGovern-Dole International Food for Education Programs.

The Administration’s funding request for the Food for Peace program for FY 2011 is already \$371 million less than the funding level for that program in FY 2008. This is because up until the last fiscal year, it was regular practice to under-fund the Food for Peace program as part of the regular appropriations process and then attempt to meet the shortfall by bolstering the program later in the year through supplemental appropriations bills. This piecemeal funding was fraught with inefficiencies, making it difficult for government agencies to control costs and procure and send commodities to needy countries in a timely manner.

This is the second year that the Administration requested adequate funding for the Food for Peace Program through the regular appropriations process to meet minimal anticipated needs, thereby reducing reliance on supplemental appropriations except for unanticipated crises due to war, economic conditions and natural disasters (such as the January 2010 earthquake in Haiti). Sufficient upfront funding is working well: it has allowed U.S. government agencies to implement

Adventist Development & Relief Agency International ♦ ACDI/VOCA ♦ Congressional Hunger Center ♦ Counterpart International
Food for the Hungry ♦ Joint Aid Management ♦ International Relief & Development ♦ Land O’Lakes ♦ OIC International
Planet Aid ♦ Project Concern International ♦ Salesian Missions ♦ United Methodist Committee on Relief ♦ World Vision

improved commodity procurement strategies which ultimately save the U.S. government and the American taxpayer money.

The Alliance letter notes, “While only a small part of the U.S. international affairs budget, the funding requested for the Food for Peace and McGovern-Dole Programs for FY 2011 would nonetheless help nearly 50 million people.” A \$544 million reduction would cut the number of beneficiaries in those food aid programs by approximately 12 million.

Sufficient funding for the Food for Peace program is critical for advancing U.S. humanitarian and security efforts. It provides a reliable source of appropriate commodities for emergencies that can be used to save lives and to give people the chance to recover. Moreover, by using food aid in development programs in poor communities where food insecurity is persistent, Food for Peace also contributes to long-term food security.

Developmental food aid programs are implemented by non-profit organizations (“private voluntary organizations”) and cooperatives in partnership with thousands of local business, governmental and organizational partners and incorporate strategies that:

- Show measurable results, such as improvements in agricultural production, incomes, household food supplies, child nutrition and dietary and sanitation practices; and,
- Build local capacity and infrastructure and prepare communities, organizations, government institutions, and businesses to expand activities, reap benefits and decrease vulnerability to hunger after the program is complete.

The McGovern-Dole Food for Education Program also has developmental goals, particularly to increase school enrollment, attendance and educational quality. Meals in schools and take-home food packages for children who regularly attend classes serve as incentives for families to send their girls to school. Longitudinal studies have shown that when girls receive at least a primary education, they tend to start their families later, adopt appropriate health practices and lead more productive lives.

For further information on U.S. food aid programs, please see www.foodaid.org.

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