

# Fact Sheet

## Farm Bill International

### Global Food Assistance in the 2023 Farm Bill

The United States is a leading contributor to global efforts to save lives and relieve suffering among people who confront hunger and malnutrition. U.S. foreign assistance helps meet immediate needs and also supports countries' efforts to cope with the causes of hunger. The main causes of current global hunger crises are conflict, climate change, and shocks such as the COVID-19 pandemic and Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

Since 1954, U.S. assistance has reached more than 4 billion people in 150 countries in Asia, Africa, and Europe. <sup>1</sup>The Marshall Plan, which helped devastated European countries recover from World War II, was a precursor to these efforts. The plan included food assistance that saved lives and strengthened people's health, enabling them to rebuild their countries and economies more quickly and effectively.



### Foreign Assistance in the Farm Bill

The farm bill spells out the main ways the United States provides emergency food assistance, as well as some long-term development programs to help them be more resilient to chronic challenges and sudden shocks. The farm bill is an enormous piece of legislation, reauthorized only every five years. It governs both U.S. and global agricultural and food policies and programs.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) administer U.S. global food aid. The aid comes in three forms: in-kind, meaning food shipped from the United States; vouchers to purchase food at local markets; and food purchased from local farmers and distributed to families.

Historically, U.S. food assistance was exclusively in-kind. But shipping food from the United States delays the arrival of much-needed supplies, sometimes for months. It also adds significantly to the costs. Meanwhile, people suffering from severe malnutrition urgently need all available resources.



Bread for the World members and other advocates worked faithfully over several five-year farm bill cycles to persuade Congress to permit a larger share of food aid to be purchased locally or regionally. These efforts paid off: in 2020, 59 percent of U.S.-provided emergency food was purchased locally or regionally—a significant increase over 2010, just 10 years earlier, when only 11 percent was local or regional purchase.

The Farm Bill also provides critical agricultural, food security and nutrition research. This farm bill offers an opportunity to increase funding to public research and development to help address increasing hunger in low- to middle-income countries, and challenges from climate change and other shocks.

### Bread for the World advocates for these international policy asks in the farm bill:

- 1. Reauthorize:** Bread is asking congress to reauthorize several important international food aid programs that fight both acute and chronic hunger and malnutrition, including: Food for Peace Title II (“Food for Peace”); McGovern-Dole International Food for Education and Child Nutrition Program (“McGovern-Dole Food for Education”); Bill Emerson Humanitarian Trust; and Doug Bereuter Farmer-to-Farmer Program.
- 2. Reform:** Bread recommends a few small refinements to existing food aid programs to ensure that programs remain efficient and effective, including eliminating commodity requirements for Food for Peace non-emergency programs to ensure programming to strengthening people’s ability to feed themselves, while not changing the commodity requirement for emergency programs. Additionally we would ask to increase local and regional procurement (LRP) in McGovern-Dole Food for Education from 10% to a range of 10-20% and allowing more access for local farmers as part of LRP to support successful graduation off U.S. assistance..
- 3. Research:** More needs to be done on research and development for food security, especially to increase nutrition and to adapt to the impact of climate change. We cannot keep up with the global hunger needs only by providing emergency food aid, we must also invest in research to help improve agricultural productivity and nutrition in these countries.
- 4. Replenish:** The Bill Emerson Humanitarian Trust provides funding to purchase U.S. commodities to alleviate severe hunger and malnutrition in times of extraordinary need. The Trust was drawn down in 2022 – for the first time since 2014 – in response to extreme need. Congress should provide a replenishment mechanism for the Bill Emerson Humanitarian Trust and lower the barriers to access funding from the Trust.

The reauthorization of the farm bill, including its global provisions, is a top priority for Bread. Programs such as Food for Peace provide lifesaving humanitarian assistance to millions of people facing dangerous levels of hunger and malnutrition.

<sup>1</sup> USAID Frequently Asked Questions. <https://www.usaid.gov/food-assistance/faq>

<sup>2</sup> Congressional Research Service: U.S. International Food Assistance: An Overview (Updated February 23, 2021) <https://sgp.fas.org/crs/row/R45422.pdf>