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June 21, 2016

Honorable Paul Ryan
Speaker of the House of Representatives
H-232, The US Capitol
Washington D.C. 20515

Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Minority Leader
H-204, The US Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Speaker Ryan and Minority Leader Pelosi,

On behalf of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops and Catholic Relief Services, we want to share with you our support for the passage of the Global Food Security Act of 2016, which authorizes the Feed the Future Initiative.

Pope Francis has said that “to defeat hunger, it is not enough to meet the needs of those who are less fortunate or to help through aid and donations those who live in situations of emergency. It is instead necessary to change the paradigm of aid and of development policies . . .” We believe the Global Food Security Act can be part of that paradigm shift.

Feed the Future was created in response to the global food crisis of 2007 that threatened to spark famine in several countries and worsened the living conditions of poor and marginalized persons around the world. The U.S. government, through the Feed the Future Initiative, has since invested heavily in agriculture-driven economic growth for poor countries. In recent years, Feed the Future has also focused more on resilience and nutrition programs for at-risk populations. We support the aims of Feed the Future and the sustained investments in agricultural development for poor farmers that the program represents.

The legislative vehicle for Feed the Future currently before the House of Representatives, S. 1252, captures many of the key elements of what makes Feed the Future an important program. In particular, those aspects of the legislation that we are especially supportive of include:

Focus on the Poor – The Feed the Future program is a significant investment in effort and resources that brings together a wide array of stakeholders for the purpose of reducing poverty. We are encouraged that the Global Food Security Act directs resources primarily to helping small-scale producers, who, in our experience, are the people most in need of assistance. We also know from experience that improving small farmer agriculture is one of the most effective ways to reduce poverty.

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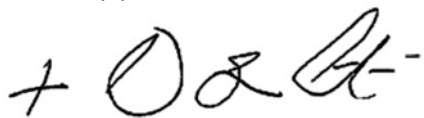
From Hardship to Resilience – People living in poverty with precious few resources – and who know what it means to be hungry – suffer disproportionately in the face of shocks like droughts and floods. The Global Food Security Act recognizes this reality, and focuses Feed the Future efforts on helping chronically vulnerable populations build assets and skills that will make them more resilient to shocks in sustainable ways.

Increased Transparency – Feed the Future is a whole of government effort that coordinates various existing U.S. programs alongside \$1 billion in core Feed the Future funding each year. The Global Food Security Act requires USAID to report on how funding from these different programs contributes towards Feed the Future’s goals and which implementing partners are used, and encourages USAID to use the appropriate funding instruments, like cooperative agreements and grants, for development purposes.

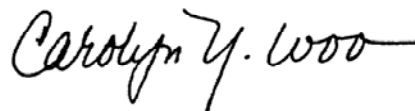
Role of Civil Society and Faith-Based Organizations – In Feed the Future countries, project activities are aligned with national agricultural development plans, which may not have been developed with adequate input from local or international civil society groups. The Global Food Security Act encourages USAID to seek input in programming from key stakeholders, including international, regional, and local faith-based and civil society organizations.

Thank you for considering our support of the Global Food Security Act. We look forward to working with you and your colleagues to pass this important legislation.

Sincerely yours,



Most Reverend Oscar Cantú
Bishop of Las Cruces
Chair, Committee on International Justice and Peace
United States Conference of Catholic Bishops



Dr. Carolyn Y. Woo
President
Catholic Relief Services