

Action Sheet

MAY 2022

God of all harvests, bless all planters everywhere: all who sow and all who gather, all who nourish and all who weed, all who thresh and bundle and bring to market. And bless all harvests. Continue your prayer with [God of All Harvests](#).

SKILL AND RELATIONSHIP BUILDING ACTION

Our missionary action is to write a letter to the editor targeting your U.S. Senators and Representative on the 2023 Farm Bill. Urge Congress to protect lifesaving international food assistance programs authorized in Title III of the Farm Bill to improve the efficiency and flexibility of international poverty-focused programs. See details below.

LASER TALK

Access to sufficient, nutritious food for all people is decreasing at a rapid pace globally. The United Nations World Food Program estimates that 43 million people around the world are currently in need of emergency food aid. An additional 47 million people are projected to be acutely food insecure by the end of this year. Conflict, climate change and the COVID-19 pandemic – and now compounded by the ripple effects of the conflict in Ukraine – continue to drive this increase in chronic hunger. While the current situation is grave, there is hope in knowing that sustainable solutions exist. Pope Francis says, “each of us has a role to play in transforming food systems for the benefit of people and the planet.”

U.S. international food assistance programs like Food for Peace, McGovern-Dole, Food for Progress and the Farmer-to-Farmer program reduce hunger and malnutrition. They do this by improving the livelihoods of small farmers, helping children excel in their studies and leveraging the expertise of American farmer volunteers to support sustainable food security outcomes. The Farm Bill sets our nation’s agriculture policy and authorizes these programs, which are funded through the annual federal appropriations process. In anticipation of the 2023 Farm Bill, we look forward to proposing improvements to these programs to make them more effective and allow us to serve more of our sisters and brothers.

BACKGROUND

Hunger and the Farm Bill

On World Food Day 2021, Pope Francis shared that “overcoming hunger is one of humanity’s greatest challenges.” The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations shared, nearly 1 in 3 people did not have access to adequate, nutritious food in 2020.¹

There are four U.S. international food assistance programs administered by the United States Department of Agriculture and the United States Agency for International Development your advocacy will focus on. The implementation of these programs relies on appropriated funding through the annual U.S. federal budget and appropriations process and the authorization of these programs every five years in the Farm Bill. These programs are: Food for Peace, Food for Progress, McGovern-Dole Food for Education and the Farmer-to-Farmer Program. The programs are implemented in collaboration with local CRS partners, with oversight and program funding from USAID or USDA. U.S. international food assistance programs support global communities using two approaches, through the use of in-kind aid procured from local American farmers and market-

¹ Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. [The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2021](#). 2021.

based assistance. According to the Congressional Research Service, in-kind aid can be described as “U.S. commodities shipped to regions in need,” and market-based assistance can be defined as the process of recipients receiving “vouchers, direct cash transfers, or locally and regionally procured food.”²

McGovern-Dole Food for Education

McGovern-Dole Food for Education, which celebrates its 20th anniversary on May 13, 2022, is one example of a CRS program authorized in the Farm Bill. In 2020, the program reached more than 3.6 million children, women, and families around the world. It works with existing schools' meal programs in food-insecure communities globally to increase child literacy rates, improve nutritional outcomes – especially for young girls – and enhance dietary practices. McGovern-Dole Food for Education has been particularly effective during the COVID-19 pandemic to ensure that children still receive food and maintain good nutrition, even while schools were temporarily closed.

Since fiscal year 2020, McGovern-Dole has been combined with Local and Regional Procurement (LRP) – another Farm Bill-authorized program – to allow McGovern-Dole programs to source food locally (market-based assistance). The local sourcing thereby supports agricultural producers and markets within and around communities and enhances the dietary diversity of school meals by including local produce. Read more about the story of [Maria Ana](#), a young woman in Honduras who can develop, grow and thrive with the support of McGovern-Dole Food for Education. CRS has seen a 7.4% increase in the number of second graders able to read at their grade level in Intibucá department where Maria Ana studies. In 2019, the department had the lowest dropout rates for first through sixth graders nationwide.

TAKE ACTION: Write a letter to the editor focused on your U.S. Senators and Representative

- 1. Find the local newspaper you will target:** To learn what is required for letters to the editor, Google the following: “(Name of the paper) letters to the editor guidelines.” Identify the word limit and submission method (i.e., via the website or email).
- 2. Think about the placement of the piece:** If you are writing to a daily newspaper, find an article or editorial that provides an entry point to discuss the need to care for vulnerable communities, especially communities facing food insecurity. If you are writing to a smaller weekly paper, write in a way that would be of interest to local readers.
- 3. Research:** Read a few letters to the editor in the newspaper you are targeting to see how they begin and the general tone.
- 4. Write your letter to the editor:** Using the newspaper’s guidelines and this Action Sheet’s information, identify yourself and share what values or experiences move you to work to support the world’s most vulnerable individuals. Have another chapter member provide some edits for your letter. Find additional guidance in this [letter to the editor training video](#).
- 5. Include your specific message:** During this time of unprecedented and dire food insecurity in the world, we urge Congress to protect lifesaving programs authorized in Title III of the Farm Bill that work towards ending hunger for the world’s most marginalized and vulnerable people. As the Farm Bill process begins, we request for Congress to make much-needed changes to international poverty-focused programs, like McGovern-Dole Food for Education, to improve its efficiency and flexibility and ensure that U.S. government implementing partners, like CRS, can utilize the most appropriate approaches to meet the needs of those impacted by severe and chronic hunger and malnutrition.
Note: Use the background information in this document to illustrate why you care and demonstrate the impact the McGovern-Dole Food for Education program is having around the world.
- 6. Report back and celebrate:** If your letter is published, contact your CRS representative, share it on social media tagging your members of Congress, send it to your members of Congress by email and have your chapter’s liaison call the key aide to make sure they saw it! If it’s not published, consider editing it, if needed, and sending it to another newspaper.
- 7. Log your published letters to the editor in the [Chapter Community site](#):** Use [this Help Guide](#) to log your action.

² Congressional Research Service. [U.S. International Food Assistance: An Overview](#). 23 February 2021.

