

# Background Information and Talking Points: Farm Bill and Federal Appropriations

## Spring Recess 2024

We believe that our work together in the United States is the outward expression of missionary discipleship. We are called to encounter Christ in our sisters and brothers most in need, and to share the Good News with others—becoming prophetic advocates for justice and the common good.

This spring, CRS partners are taking united action to advocate for:

- The authorization of critical hunger- and poverty-reducing programs in the Farm Bill.
- Increased humanitarian and development aid to reduce hunger and improve food security and agricultural outcomes.

**Your voice matters!** Your members of Congress want to know *why* you and your community care about these issues. As you prepare to meet with your senators and representative, reflect on the stories of our global family that you can share to illustrate the importance of taking action to support people in need.

## LEGISLATIVE ASK

**Important:** This ask may change rapidly in the coming weeks. Prior to your meeting, please ensure you have the most up to date ask and talking points by checking your email for recent Spring Recess communications from CRS staff.

*During this time of unprecedented and dire global food insecurity, I urge you to prioritize supporting hunger-reducing development and humanitarian assistance around the world by:*

- Protecting non-emergency development programming in Title II Food for Peace by opposing the inclusion of the American Farmers Feed the World Act (H.R. 4293/S.2862) in the upcoming Farm Bill.
- Increasing fiscal year 2025 funding for poverty-reducing international development and humanitarian assistance, focusing on Farm Bill and USAID programs that improve agricultural outcomes, increase food security and reduce hunger.

## BACKGROUND: GLOBAL FOOD CRISIS

According to the United Nations World Food Program, more than 300 million people are experiencing acute levels of food insecurity and malnutrition—a magnitude of hunger that our world has not seen before. Families are struggling to meet their food needs due to the compounding effects of conflict, climate change and rising food costs. Inflation of food prices has put people under tremendous strain, while supply chain interruptions have impeded humanitarian operations and disrupted local and regional markets.

The global food crisis is disrupting the efforts of communities who have been working hard to lift themselves out of poverty. Instead of being able to thrive, they are fighting merely to survive. We must act together to advocate for sustainable solutions that help us build a better world. In *Fratelli Tutti*, Pope Francis states that “As a community, we have an obligation to ensure that every person lives with dignity and has sufficient opportunities for his or her integral development.”

CRS works in more than 120 countries, responding to immediate needs as well as implementing long-term development programs that provide opportunities for people to build a pathway to prosperity for themselves and their families. Communities are engaging in capacity building efforts that help them overcome the challenges of food insecurity and develop self-sufficiency. Activities include training farmers to improve their harvests, facilitating access to microfinance groups, supporting school meal programs, restoring degraded lands through water-smart agriculture, providing nutrition support for new mothers and infants and improving access to clean and reliable drinking water. CRS is proud to continue our partnership alongside Congress and the Administration to enact timely legislation to address global hunger and support the implementation of U.S.-funded emergency and development food security programming around the world.

## FARM BILL PROGRAMS

The Farm Bill is a multiyear package of legislation that authorizes a variety of domestic and international food and agricultural programs. CRS focuses its advocacy on Title III, which addresses foreign trade and international food aid programs. Programs authorized in this title include **Food for Peace**, **Food for Progress**, **McGovern-Dole Food for Education** and **Farmer-to-Farmer**.

A recently introduced bill, the American Farmers Feed the World Act (AFFWA), would seriously harm the Food for Peace program and may be included in the base text of the Farm Bill. Your advocacy is crucial. During the next few months, we will need your help to ensure legislators include vital international, hunger-reducing programs in the Farm Bill. It is also critical that the AFFWA does not become part of the bill.

### Title II Food for Peace

For more than 65 years, the Food for Peace program has provided food assistance around the world. During an emergency, Food for Peace delivers U.S.-sourced agricultural commodities—like corn, soybeans, oil, etc.—as well as cash, vouchers and locally procured food to people facing crises. In-kind food commodities help people access food to survive and prevents the need to sell critical assets like seeds or livestock or to migrate to other regions and countries in search of food and better opportunities for their families.

In addition, Food for Peace supports communities that are susceptible to economic, social or climate-related turmoil to improve and sustain their food and nutrition security through non-emergency programs authorized in Section 202(b) of the Food for Peace Act. These programs, called Resilience Food Security Activities (RFSAs), are unique, multi-year programs that build on emergency food security interventions, enhancing individual, community and national resilience, reducing chronic vulnerability and facilitating inclusive growth. RFSAs support communities to advance beyond poverty and reduce the need for future humanitarian assistance.

### American Farmers Feed the World Act (AFFWA)

The American Farmers Feed the World Act (S. 2862, H.R.4293) has been introduced in the House and Senate for inclusion in the Farm Bill. If enacted or included in base text of the Farm Bill, Food for Peace long-term development programs would become inoperable. At a time of rising global hunger and malnutrition, the loss of Food for Peace non-emergency programs would result in 3 million fewer people receiving critical assistance to build self-sufficiency. AFFWA would also undermine the flexibility necessary to effectively implement food assistance programs based on community needs—including providing U.S. commodities, sourcing locally supplied seeds for farmers and improving market access, among other approaches. Instead, investing in long-term development programs, like Food for Peace, decreases the need for future humanitarian assistance.

## The Legislative Process

The Farm Bill must be renewed or reauthorized every five years or many of its provisions will lapse and it will revert to the original 1938 version. The House and Senate draft a bill, hold committee hearings and finalize text before going to the Floor of each chamber for consideration and passage. Once the two versions of the Farm Bill are passed in the House and Senate, the bill will go to a joint or “conference” committee that includes members of the House and Senate. The conference committee will reconcile the differences in the bills and return a single bill to the full House and Senate for final passage. Finally, it is sent to the president to be signed into law.

Once programs have been authorized in the Farm Bill, it allows the ability for U.S. funding to be appropriated to these programs, which is a separate step that happens during the annual federal appropriations process.

## State of Play

Although it was set to expire at the end of September 2023, the Farm Bill was extended until the end of September 2024 to give Congress sufficient time to pass a new Farm Bill. The House and Senate Agriculture Committees are drafting separate versions of the bill, and long-term food assistance and development programs in the Food for Peace Title II program are in jeopardy. Together with provisions that would reduce authorized funding, the AFFWA would significantly change or eliminate important provisions of Food for Peace. The AFFWA may be included in the base text of the Farm Bill or offered as an amendment in committee. This is a critical moment to ensure legislators include international, hunger-reducing programs in the Farm Bill and that the AFFWA is excluded from the Farm Bill.

In early March, Congress passed a package of federal appropriations bills that included a \$62 million cut to Food for Peace. With this reduction, it is more important than ever that Food for Peace programs can utilize funding in the most effective and efficient way that meets the specific needs of the community.

## FEDERAL APPROPRIATIONS

During the annual budget and appropriations process, Congress negotiates how to spend U.S. taxpayer dollars. CRS and the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops advocate on [priority accounts](#) to ensure the U.S. government provides robust assistance to alleviate suffering and eliminate hunger and poverty around the world. Less than 1% of the \$6.2 trillion in annual federal spending went to foreign assistance last year. Just *half* of that 1% is directed toward poverty-reducing humanitarian and development aid. Through the U.S. Department of State, the U.S. Agency for International Development and the U.S. Department of Agriculture, organizations such as CRS partner with the U.S. government to implement programming funded by the U.S. Congress. While foreign assistance has traditionally received strong bipartisan support, protecting and increasing funding for these lifesaving accounts is not possible without the diligent work of constituents who call on Congress to prioritize this funding.

## State of Play

As of March 22, Congress has passed all fiscal year 2024 funding bills. Unfortunately, many of the accounts that CRS prioritizes were impacted by notable reductions to funding. The Agriculture bill released earlier in the month included a \$62 million cut to Food for Peace and a 1.5% cut to McGovern-Dole Food for Education. The State and Foreign Operations bill received an overall 6% cut, which impacted many of CRS' priority budget lines including: Global Health Security, Development Assistance, the Global Fund and the Complex Crisis Fund. Though some priority budget lines saw maintained or increased funding, this was mainly due to the reduction in funding for the Global Fund and Development Assistance. As we approach the start of the fiscal year 2025 appropriations process, it is vitally important to ensure that legislators prioritize international lifesaving aid in the federal budget.

The administration released their fiscal year 2025 budget proposal in early March 2024. Throughout the spring and summer, the House and Senate will draft and negotiate appropriations bills. Congress will have until the end

of September to introduce and pass fiscal year 2025 appropriations measures. Given ongoing debates in Washington over the debt and deficit and the upcoming elections, we expect Congress to pass a Continuing Resolution in September, which will fund the government temporarily at current levels into the next fiscal year beyond the November elections. Until Congress finalizes fiscal year 2025 appropriations, CRS and its supporters will continue to advocate on our priority accounts, especially those that fund USAID and Farm Bill related global hunger programs, to ensure the U.S. government provides robust assistance to alleviate suffering and eliminate poverty.

## TALKING POINTS FOR CONGRESSIONAL MEETINGS

**Important:** These talking points may change rapidly in the coming weeks. Prior to your meeting, please ensure you have the most up to date ask and talking points by checking your email for recent Spring Recess communications from CRS staff.

### Framing

#### *Begin with gratitude*

*Thank you for taking time to talk about global hunger and poverty, issues that are very important to me/us. I/We look forward to discussing improving global food security and reducing hunger through:*

- The Farm Bill Food for Peace program and;
- Fiscal year 2025 funding for international development and humanitarian assistance.

**Express gratitude** for something your member has done recently related to hunger or poverty.

#### *Introduction: Who you are and why you're there*

*As people of faith seeking justice and care for all in our world, we believe there is a moral obligation to provide assistance for our human family and address the root causes of hunger and poverty. Global food insecurity is a pressing issue of our time and impacts our district/state as well as around the world.*

**Share about yourself/the group**, your work in the district/state and your connection to CRS. Share your personal story of why you support CRS' international humanitarian and development work, including your concern about our human family and why global issues like hunger and poverty matter to you.

#### *Moving to the issue: Set the stage for the conversation*

*The United States government has the capacity to address the needs of people around the world experiencing poverty and vulnerability and to prevent hunger. U.S. leadership is critical in our collective effort to address the root causes of hunger and poverty.*

#### **The Ask**

*During this time of unprecedented and dire global food insecurity, I/we urge you to prioritize supporting hunger-reducing development and humanitarian assistance around the world by:*

- Protecting non-emergency development programming in Title II Food for Peace by opposing the inclusion of the American Farmers Feed the World Act (H.R. 4293/S.2862) in the upcoming Farm Bill.
- Increasing fiscal year 2025 funding for poverty-reducing international development and humanitarian assistance, focusing on Farm Bill and USAID programs that improve agricultural outcomes, increase food security and reduce hunger. [These accounts are detailed in [CRS' appropriations chart here.](#)]



Share why Congress prioritizing these issues is important to you and your community as constituents. Speak to priority areas your member of Congress may value that are related to these issues.

Consider sharing these points to support your dialogue:

- The international food security programs in the Farm Bill, including Food for Peace, provide people with the resources they need during emergency and non-emergency situations to feed their families and support long-term solutions to poverty by strengthening resilience and self-sufficiency.
- However, if the American Farmers Feed the World Act is enacted or included in the text of the Farm Bill, it would compromise critical non-emergency Food for Peace programs and undercut the ability to tailor food assistance to the diverse needs of communities around the world. Despite its title, this bill will not increase or improve U.S. foreign food assistance programs. The American Farmers Feed the World Act will harm millions of children and families, particularly during this time of rising global hunger and malnutrition.
- The 3 million people currently receiving assistance under Resilience Food Security Activities funded by Food for Peace non-emergency programs could lose access to critical aid that builds capacity and self-sufficiency. Programs are most effective when implementing organizations can provide the right response based on community needs—including U.S. commodities, locally supplied seeds for farmers and improved market access, among other approaches. Investing in long-term development programs such as Food for Peace decreases the need for future humanitarian assistance.
- Finally, with conflict, hunger and displacement ravaging communities across the world, U.S. leadership and international collaboration is more important than ever to wisely resolve the many crises of our time. We urge Congress to increase international poverty-reducing humanitarian and development assistance in fiscal year 2025 to the levels indicated in the chart we shared to help foster a safer, more prosperous and just world.

**Share a story** about the importance and impact of U.S. funded international humanitarian and development assistance programs that help people feed their families, build sustainable livelihoods and strengthen their resilience against future economic challenges. Consider using one of these CRS program stories:

- [What the Farm Bill Makes Possible: Raúl's Story](#)
- [Building Resilience from the Ground Up: Eulalio's Story](#)
- [The Impact of U.S. International Assistance: Nery's Story](#)

### **Repeat the Ask**

*During this time of unprecedented and dire global food insecurity, I urge you to prioritize supporting hunger-reducing development and humanitarian assistance around the world by:*

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## Discussion

### Questions to Ask

- How does [senator/representative name] plan to approach the international non-emergency development programs in the Farm Bill Food for Peace Title II program and the American Farmers Feed the World Act?
- How does [senator/representative name] plan to approach hunger- and poverty-reducing international development and humanitarian assistance funding in fiscal year 2025?
- What can I do, as a constituent, to continue to advance these important issues with you/your office?

### Comments to Raise

- If the senator/representative travels abroad, ask if he/she would like to visit CRS programming in the future. CRS works in more than 120 countries around the world and would welcome an opportunity to show the senator/representative the impact U.S. investments in food security have on the lives of families and communities worldwide.
- Let your senator/representative know that you—along with CRS—can serve as a resource both in Washington, DC and back home in the district/state. Express an interest in continuing to dialogue with them, or their staff, on these and other issues of mutual interest.

