

April 3, 2023

The Honorable Debbie Stabenow
Senate Committee on Agriculture,
Nutrition, and Forestry
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable John Boozman
Senate Committee on Agriculture,
Nutrition, and Forestry
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairwoman Stabenow and Ranking Member Boozman:

As you determine priorities for the upcoming Farm Bill, we strongly urge you to further support and promote nutrition in International Food Aid Programs. Promoting both food and nutrition security is critical to ensuring populations around the globe can access the foods and nutrients needed to maintain health as well as prevent and treat malnutrition.

This Committee has a long-standing record of supporting International Food Aid programs that are administered by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the United States Department of Agriculture Foreign Agriculture Service (USDA FAS). In FY 2022, USAID was able to provide approximately \$2.6 billion in Food for Peace Title II assistance which reached nearly 45 million people in 31 countries. The McGovern-Dole Program celebrated its 20th anniversary in 2022 and since its inception, it has helped feed and educate more than 31.1 million children in nearly 50 countries.

While nutrition is a key component of International Food Aid programs, like Food for Peace Title II and the McGovern-Dole Food for Education Program, it is critical that nutrition be further prioritized in these programs as rates of global hunger and malnutrition continue to rise. Malnutrition is the greatest threat to child survival worldwide, making children more susceptible to deadly infectious disease and contributing to more child deaths, roughly 3 million a year, than [AIDS](#), [malaria](#), and [tuberculosis](#) combined. Due to continued impacts from the pandemic, conflict, and climate shocks and stressors, severe malnutrition, known as wasting, has increased globally with some countries seeing a [40% or more increase](#) in child wasting since 2016. Malnutrition costs the world \$3.5 trillion in lost productivity and healthcare costs each year.

In the non-emergency component of the Food for Peace program, one of its goals is to address root causes of hunger and make vulnerable communities more resilient to shocks. It also aims to reduce chronic malnutrition among children under 5 and pregnant or lactating women. McGovern-Dole Food for Education typically targets school aged children, but the legislative mandate does allow McGovern-Dole to target younger children and their mothers, and the annual notice of funding opportunity encourages activities that support nutrition during the first 1,000 days. Research has consistently shown that the first 1,000 days is a fleeting, critical window when nutrition interventions for both mothers and babies have an outsized impact compared to waiting until these children are older before intervening. Ensuring children have access to good nutrition when it matters most is one of the most powerful and cost-effective ways to create brighter, healthier futures.

To further support nutrition security, particularly amongst young children and mothers, USAID and USDA FAS should work with each implementing organization to ensure nutrition interventions like breastfeeding counseling or support services, Vitamin A supplementation, prenatal vitamins, and ready-to-use therapeutic foods (RUTFs), are further prioritized and where possible, included, in their implementation plans.

Additional opportunities in the Farm Bill to promote nutrition security include through local and regional procurement and replenishment of the Bill Emerson Humanitarian Trust. Connecting vulnerable communities with nutritious foods through these efforts can further promote nutrition security and prevent or treat malnutrition.

While promoting both food and nutrition security through International Food Aid programs can lead to improved health, reduced rates of malnutrition, and more resilient communities, it also makes financial sense. Nutrition interventions are not only relatively inexpensive to implement, but they also have an extremely high return on investment (ROI), with every \$1 invested yielding up to \$35 in economic returns.

We appreciate your consideration of this request, and we look forward to working with you to ensure that nutrition is further prioritized in International Food Aid programs that will be reauthorized in the 2023 Farm Bill.

Sincerely,

1,000 Days, an initiative of FHI Solutions
Action Against Hunger
Alliance to End Hunger
Bread for the World
Edesia
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
Food for the Hungry
GrainPro Incorporated
Helen Keller International
Islamic Relief USA
One Acre Fund
Opportunity International
RESULTS

cc: Secretary Thomas Vilsack, United States Department of Agriculture
Administrator Samantha Power, United States Agency for International Development