

Barriers to Recipient Country Ownership of U.S. Food Aid: Congressional Earmarks, Set-Asides, and the Impact of Special Interests on Food Security Assistance

Rachel Voss

Honors in International Studies Capstone
American University

Advisor: Irving Rosenthal
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Glossary

CAADP – Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Program

CGIAR – Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research

GHFSI – Global Hunger and Food Security Initiative

JCRR – Joint Sino-American Commission on Rural Reconstruction

MCA – Millennium Challenge Account

MCC – Millennium Challenge Corporation

NEPAD – New Partnership for Africa's Development

OMB – Office of Management and Budget

PEPFAR – President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief

P.L. 480 – Public Law 480, Food for Peace: The U.S. program for food aid dispersal and agricultural surplus disposal established by the 1954 Trade Development and Assistance Act.

PMI – President's Malaria Initiative

PSD-7 – Presidential Study Directive on U.S. Global Development Policy

PVO – private voluntary organization: A non-governmental organization often charged with the implementation of foreign assistance programs.

QDDR – Quadrennial Diplomacy and Development Review

TAB – Technical Assistance Bureau

TCA – Technical Cooperation Administration:

Title II – Shorthand for the P.L. 480 Emergency and Development Assistance Program, through which USAID distributes food aid for immediate humanitarian assistance and agricultural development. It presently holds the vast majority of P.L. 480 funds.

USAID – United States Agency for International Development

USDA – United States Department of Agriculture

WFP – United Nations World Food Program

Barriers to Recipient Country Ownership of U.S. Food Aid: Congressional Earmarks, Set-Asides, and the Impact of Special Interests on Food Security Assistance

By some measures, food aid represents the most fundamental form of foreign assistance. Its objective and solution—to lessen human suffering by feeding the world's hungry—are perhaps the most straightforward of any U.S. aid effort. As hunger is the most basic of human problems, its alleviation on a global scale is considered a moral obligation for those privileged enough to possess surplus food; any child can be persuaded to clean his or her plate when reminded that there are starving children on another continent. As such, food aid receives uncommonly strong political and public support in the U.S. And yet, with global hunger as widespread as ever before, populations in the developing world steadily expanding, many famine-plagued nations heavily reliant on donated food, and climate change threatening food insecure regions with severe droughts and floods, one must question whether massive shipments of U.S. grain are an adequate solution to burgeoning global hunger.

Digging beneath of the surface of this seemingly straightforward problem, the causes of global hunger appear much more complex than aid policymakers once assumed. For decades, hunger-stricken countries have been told what they are missing—food—and have been sent millions of tons of it, with the purest humanitarian intentions of the American people. Seldom have aid-receiving countries been offered an opportunity to express their needs or preferences in negotiations over the provision of this assistance. Development experts have operated under their own logical assumptions: that hungry people need food, and that supplying it will spur development. A half century later, however, a preponderance of food aid has resulted in neither long-term development nor immediate hunger alleviation. In fact, humanitarian food aid has, to some extent, hampered agricultural development and fostered dependency in many developing nations.

If the causes of global hunger are more complex than fundamental food shortages, the manner in which aid is provided must come to reflect this complexity. Increasingly, development experts have recognized that those individuals with the best knowledge of what is missing in a specific locale are those who live within it. Thus, to develop complex solutions that address the complex causes of food insecurity, it is imperative that policymakers reform U.S. food aid policies to grant partner countries greater ownership over U.S.-provided assistance. Despite growing U.S. and international consensus around the need for increased recipient country ownership over food security programs, Congressional earmarks, set-asides, and the impact of U.S. special interests have trapped foreign aid policymakers and implementors in a cycle of ineffective and unsustainable food security assistance programs.

The first section of this paper introduces the issues at hand: traditional U.S. food security assistance policy, the implications of these policies for agricultural development in aid-receiving countries, the landscape of the U.S. foreign assistance policymaking process, and the benefits and downsides of country ownership. The next section presents the evolution of U.S. food aid policy in the latter half of the twentieth century, with particular attention to the forces that shaped it. Section III examines the directions food assistance policy has taken in the last decade, as international development experts—particularly agricultural specialists—have realized the limitations of traditional food aid and begun to consider reform options. The final section of the paper, written in partnership with Caitlin Crotty and Miriam Meyers, proposes a series of food aid policy reform measures for the Obama administration.

Section I. U.S. Food Aid Policy, Country Ownership, and the Impact of U.S. Assistance on Recipient Country Agricultural Development Efforts

P.L. 480 and Criticisms of Food Aid Policy

The earliest (and more straightforward) incarnations of U.S. food assistance date back to the early nineteenth century, when American goods were shipped abroad for emergency, humanitarian, and disaster relief. Over the course of the next two centuries, U.S. humanitarian food aid reached most regions of the world. Though food security projects steadily expanded to include technical assistance to farmers and infrastructural projects to improve rural food access, the primary focus of this paper is on food aid. As foreign aid became more and more a tool of foreign policy, food assistance strategies grew to incorporate political objectives and development goals. Significantly, food aid has also become a tool of the U.S. agricultural community. It has been the impact of this relationship with American farmers and other U.S. agricultural interests that has shaped modern food security assistance policy.

The cornerstone of the U.S. food aid program is known as P.L. 480, or Food for Peace. It was institutionalized in the Trade Development and Assistance Act of 1954, which:

“declared it to be the policy of the U.S. to use its abundant agricultural productivity to promote the foreign policy of the U.S. by enhancing the food security of the developing world through the use of agricultural commodities and local currencies accruing under this Act to combat world hunger and malnutrition and their causes; promote broad-based, equitable and sustainable development; expand international trade; develop and expand export markets; and foster and encourage the development of private enterprise and democratic participation in developing countries.”¹

While the first objective of food aid is increased global food security, the program has come to be a boon to U.S. farmers, the larger U.S. agricultural industry, and American shipping companies that move grain from U.S. ports to famine-stricken countries.

¹ “Food for Peace (P.L. 480, Titles II and III) [Formerly USAID Handbook 9].” U.S. Agency for International Development. 1 Jan. 1993. Section 1A. pp. 13.

The Trade Development and Assistance Act divided food aid into a number of legislative titles, splitting responsibility for aid distribution between the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Foreign Operations Administration (the premier foreign aid agency of the era, now the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID)), State Department, Office of Management and Budget (OMB), and Treasury Department.² Under the Act's most recent reauthorizations, Title I, Trade and Development Assistance, allows for the sale of goods "for dollars on credit terms, or local currencies" and is overseen by the USDA. USAID administers Title II (the Emergency and Development Assistance Program), Title III (Food for Development), and Title V (Farmer to Farmer assistance). The latter two programs aim to bolster market systems and long-term food security through monetized food aid and technical assistance.³ Title II, which accounts for the majority of U.S. food aid today, provides approximately half its funds for agricultural development and half for immediate humanitarian assistance through the World Food Program and U.S. private voluntary organizations (PVOs).⁴

Though the P.L. 480 program received strong support in its early years, it has become one of the most controversial and widely criticized assistance efforts in recent years. Some criticisms are related to inefficient program operations. Regular rewrites and reauthorizations of the legislation have resulted in the complete removal of funding for the Food for Development and Farmer to Farmer programs in recent years. Title I (program food aid) appears to be following these programs into oblivion.⁵ Meanwhile, external stakeholders, including farmers,

2 "FFP." Section 1A. pp. 13.

3 Ibid.

4 Simmons, Emmy B. "Monetization of Food Aid: Reconsidering U.S. Policy and Practice." Partnership to Cut Hunger and Poverty in Africa, 2009. pp. 4;
Taylor, Michael R. and Julie A. Howard. "Investing in Africa's Future: U.S. Agricultural Development Assistance for Sub-Saharan Africa." Partnership to Cut Hunger and Poverty in Africa, Resources for the Future, 2005. pp. 84-85.

5 Barrett, Christopher B. and Daniel G. Maxwell. "PL480 Food Aid: We Can Do Better." *Choices: The*

processors, shippers, and PVOs, “have had a powerful influence on the Title II program, working together to expand the size and complexity of the program”, much to their own benefit.⁶ The negative impact of these conflicting priorities emerges in budget accounts and delivery timelines. Between FY2000 and FY2004, shipping costs accounted for \$30 million of \$88 million designated for agricultural development under Title II.⁷ Food aid delivery timelines also reflect the inefficiencies of modern food aid programs; thanks to detailed contracts with U.S. shippers and requirements for U.S.-procured goods, food aid arrives in hungry mouths an estimated 4-6 months after orders are placed.⁸ With such delays, many of the benefits of emergency and disaster-related food aid are lost.

The key subject of controversy, however, is the practice of monetization, which first appeared in the 1985 P.L. 480 reauthorization. Monetization is the sale of food aid shipped from the U.S. for local currency, which can then be used to cover administrative costs of food aid distribution or fund local development projects. Modest monetization requirements set by the 1985 and 1996 Farm Bills have become irrelevant, as the vast majority of Title II non-emergency food aid—sometimes 100%—is now monetized.⁹ While monetization generates funds to reinvest in rural development initiatives, theoretically contributing to long-term food security, the administrative costs and negative impacts on local agricultural development make the program highly controversial. Monetization is administratively impractical, as costs of procurement, shipment, and delivery exceed revenues generated by U.S. farmers. Furthermore, the influx of U.S.-procured goods can dramatically disrupt markets in aid-receiving countries, creating

Magazine of Food, Farm, and Resource Issues. 3rd Quarter 2004.

6 “Strategic Plan for 2006-2010.” Office of Food for Peace, Bureau for Democracy, Conflict and Humanitarian Assistance. May 2005. pp. 14.

7 Taylor and Howard. pp. 84-85.

8 “Foreign Assistance: Various Challenges Impede the Efficiency and Effectiveness of U.S. Food Aid.” Government Accountability Office. GAO-07-560. April 2007. pp. 19.

9 Simmons (2009). pp. iv.

dependency on food aid, displacing commercial imports, and discouraging local agricultural sector development.¹⁰

American farmers have always been major proponents of Food for Peace, but critics allege that the USDA is concerned solely with the disposal of agricultural surplus, not with the program's political objectives or ultimate outcomes.¹¹ In light of monetization's negative impacts on local agricultural development, many development experts—including USAID officials in charge of Title II, III, and V dispersal—declare that P.L. 480 is now more a tool of farm policy than foreign policy, and should be acknowledged as such. As food aid has come to comprise a significant fraction of agricultural exports and overall foreign assistance commitments, many aid professionals question whether this program truly serves the development mission of USAID, the foreign policy interests of the State Department, or the social and economic needs of aid-receiving countries.¹² The Obama administration must critically evaluate the degree to which P.L. 480 embodies aid best practices and be prepared to implement alternative food aid policies and methods of food aid delivery.

Food Aid Alternatives: Agricultural Development

Because the causes of and solutions to food insecurity appear superficially simple, the billions of dollars poured into food aid programs each year have appeased the guilty conscience of many Americans. However, with little evidence to suggest that these programs have made strides in the fight against chronic global hunger, aid practitioners are left searching for alternate routes to long-term food security through agricultural development. Though a large percentage

10 Simmons (2009). pp. v.

11 Ruttan, Vernon W. *United States Development Assistance Policy: The Domestic Politics of Foreign Economic Aid*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996. pp. 155.

12 Ibid. pp. 156.

of populations in the developing world are rural farmers, U.S. development initiatives of the last two decades have largely neglected the agricultural sector. Over time, scholars and development experts have come to recognize the central importance of agriculture in both long-term economic development and short-term food security.

In many ways, the early decades of U.S. foreign assistance were a learning process for development experts. For years, industrial sector growth and infrastructural development—the route by which the U.S., Japan, and Europe had developed—were considered the most effective routes to economic growth and stability.¹³ As tests of this development theory proved inconclusive in newly developing nations, aid practitioners began to reevaluate investment priorities. C. Peter Timmer highlights what many experts have come to realize: that agricultural sector development is central to sustainable bottom-up economic growth and poverty reduction:

“No country has been able to sustain a rapid transition out of poverty without raising productivity in its agricultural sector.... The process involves a successful transformation where agriculture, through higher productivity, provides food, labor, and even savings to the process of urbanization and industrialization. A dynamic agriculture raises labor productivity in the rural economy, pulls up wages, and gradually eliminates the worst dimensions of absolute poverty.”¹⁴

It has also become increasingly clear that agricultural sector development and food security are key to stability in war-torn regions, and thus central to U.S. national security interests. The UN University’s Agriculture for Peace Project has observed that “agriculture could or should have played an important role in conflict prevention or postconflict reconstruction” in most recent civil conflicts, as greater agricultural development increases political and economic stability while decreasing the appeal of military employment.¹⁵ A lack of food security has been

13 Butterfield, Samuel Hale. *U.S. Development Aid—An Historic First: Achievements and Failures in the Twentieth Century*. Westport: Praeger Publishers, 2004. pp. 121.

14 Timmer, C. Peter. “Agriculture and Pro-Poor Growth: Reviewing the Issues.” Center for Global Development, 2005. pp. 3.

15 Messer, Ellen and Marc J. Cohen. “Conflict, Food Insecurity and Globalization.” *Food, Culture & Society*.

identified as both a cause and consequence of prolonged conflicts.¹⁶ However, “[d]evelopment assistance, including aid to agriculture and rural development, can deter conflict if it is integrated into the construction of social contexts that promote equity”.¹⁷

The variety of U.S. foreign assistance programs related to agriculture demonstrates a growing recognition of its value. Assistance for agricultural development aims further than simply improved productivity. Enabling institutional environments, beneficial trade rules, infrastructural development, improved market access and export capacity, value-added production, and effectively applied research are also necessary inputs that USAID and other aid agencies seek to support.¹⁸ To encourage development within partner countries, USAID policy aims to improve agricultural productivity, implement competitiveness strategies, build infrastructure, provide scholarships and training, create policy dialogue, restore agricultural research budgets, improve rural financial systems (to aid long-term investment, savings, and remittances) and disseminate knowledge. Furthermore, to improve the external climate, U.S. aid programs aim to broaden trade negotiations, connect Third World farmers to U.S. and world markets, and ease damage done by subsidies in the developed world.¹⁹

Though such ideas have been incorporated into U.S. foreign assistance strategies that prioritize agricultural sector growth, U.S. politicians and agricultural interests often have markedly different aid agendas. As such, the logic tying agricultural assistance to development is rarely expressed in aid legislation. Over the last several decades, agricultural development has taken a backseat to short-term humanitarian assistance, presidential initiatives, and restricted programs earmarked by Congress. Timmer identifies a number of causes for this disparity

Summer 2007; 10 (2). pp. 299.

16 Messer and Cohen. pp. 303-304.

17 Ibid. pp. 309.

18 Taylor and Howard. pp. 3.

19 U.S. Agency for International Development Agriculture Program Website.

between rhetoric and actual policy, citing four of the most significant obstacles:

“(1) ‘new’ and more difficult initial conditions confronting policymakers; (2) rising opposition from rich countries, both in the form of protection of their own farmers and concerns over losing their export markets; (3) a relatively stagnant shelf of available agricultural technologies that could be easily borrowed and widely adopted by farmers; and (4) donors who have been distracted from their core mission by development faddism and pressures from ‘single-issue’ interest groups.”²⁰

While all of these factors are relevant, the second and fourth points are the most central to U.S. foreign aid policymaking, and thus represent the central focus of this paper.

The U.S. Foreign Assistance Policymaking Landscape

While USAID has consistently sought to ensure aid effectiveness and limit the abuse of assistance funds, the agency is only one of many actors involved in the policymaking process.²¹ Due to the highly complex nature of foreign assistance policymaking, the Executive Branch, U.S. special interest groups, and Congress each have a distinct voice in aid programming. For example, the White House and State Department have always been major players in the design and implementation phases of assistance policy, putting strategic political objectives first and long-term development objectives second.²² In recent years, politicized presidential initiatives have become a driving force in aid program planning, bringing the White House's aid objectives into conflict with those of other foreign assistance agencies.

Private contractors and PVOs in the assistance community with a financial stake in foreign assistance policy have also exerted substantial influence on the policymaking process. In the context of food aid and agricultural assistance, these parties include farmers and food

²⁰ Timmer. pp. 16.

²¹ Ruttan. pp. 12.

²² Ibid. pp. 9.

processors; biotechnology research and development companies; the maritime shipping industry; manufacturers of farm equipment, seeds, and fertilizers; and universities or non-governmental agencies enlisted to disseminate agricultural knowledge and related technical assistance.²³ These contractors lobby policymakers and convey the local and domestic benefits of their supported policies. In the U.S., where food aid has provided an outlet for agricultural surplus over the last 50 years, agricultural sector development in aid-receiving countries threatens to dramatically slow or weaken export markets:

“This concern is manifest in legislative directives that prohibit USAID, for example, from helping poor countries develop their soybean, sugar, or orange industries. It is manifest in the continued insistence that food aid is ‘development assistance,’ despite overwhelming evidence that food aid usually distorts market incentives for local farmers.”²⁴

As such, U.S. special interests have pushed foreign assistance policymakers to emphasize the use of U.S.-procured food aid rather than assistance that encourages agricultural development in competitive industries and overall self-sufficiency.

The role of Congress in budget authorization and appropriation can dramatically skew aid policy objectives and restrict country ownership and management of food security assistance and aid in general. To the dismay of many USAID employees and development experts, the 1990s brought a wave of politicized presidential initiatives and Congressional earmarks designed less to meet the needs of the developing world than to support the interests of domestic constituencies. Donors’ constant redefining of new poverty reduction strategies has “impeded the implementation of core strategies that focus on sound governance, effective macro economic management, and a reliance on sustained public support for private markets”.²⁵ Funding for

²³ Ruttan. pp. 14-15.

²⁴ Timmer. pp. 18.

²⁵ Ibid. pp. 21.

agricultural assistance programs has been hit particularly hard, barely keeping pace with inflation rates by some calculations.²⁶ The reasons for this go beyond the influence of special interests, however.

While specialized initiatives often contain measurable goals and detailed monitoring programs, it can be relatively difficult to measure and demonstrate to Congressional appropriations committees the tangible impacts of long-term development projects (particularly those undertaken by diverse contractors and implementing agencies).²⁷ As a result, emergency food aid—which produces immediate and well-documented results—has been a higher funding priority than long-term agricultural development in recent years. Long-term investments in development have also taken a back seat to foreign aid dispensed in conjunction with U.S. politically strategic and military activities,²⁸ as is evident in the \$340 million decrease, in real terms, in annual agricultural spending between the 1980s and 2006.²⁹ Aid experts' commitment to increasing agricultural development must overcome these barriers and find expression in food security assistance policy and budgets.

Ownership and Foreign Assistance

More than fifty years since the institutionalization of U.S. foreign assistance, aid projects' records of success are decidedly mixed. Despite successful battles against preventable diseases and adult illiteracy in the developing world, global hunger, poverty, and staggering social and economic inequality remain major challenges of assistance programs. In the context of inefficient food aid programs shaped by U.S. agricultural interests, the neglect of agricultural

26 Taylor and Howard. pp. 71.

27 Ibid. pp. 87.

28 Ibid. pp. 75.

29 Bertini, Catherine and Dan Glickman. “Bringing Agriculture Back to U.S. Foreign Policy.” *Foreign Affairs*. May-June 2009; 88 (3). pp. 97.

development assistance for famine-plagued countries, and the multiplicity of interests involved in foreign assistance policymaking, several of the reasons for these policy failures are already clear. Insufficient recipient country ownership of aid offers yet another explanation.

In recent years, there has emerged a growing international consensus around the importance of granting aid recipients greater control and management of the resources provided by the donor community. Ownership is fundamentally defined as the “authority and responsibility to take final decisions over the object or process” at hand—in this case, food security programming.³⁰ In contrast to external decision-making processes that determine how aid is to be used, increased ownership grants aid recipients the opportunity and responsibility to review and contribute to assistance policies and participate in joint decisions.³¹ It offers a vehicle by which to adapt development practices to suit a local context, channeling resources toward more sustainable, socially appropriate solutions.

Since the adoption of the U.S. Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, foreign aid programs have, with full openness, served to forward the economic and political goals of domestic constituencies as much as aid-receiving countries themselves. Thus the idea that U.S. aid enable recipients to better help themselves is, as David Ellerman points out, “the *fundamental conundrum* of development assistance”.³² While continued dependency on American goods and services serves U.S. interests, it undermines the ability of partner countries to build capacity for sustainable and long-term development according to their individual contexts, priorities, and needs. Aid policies in the last twenty years, recognizing the numerous failures of early assistance programs and the crucial importance of partner country participation in project planning and

30 Cramer, Christopher, Howard Stein, and John Weeks. “Ownership and Donorship: Analytical Issues and a Tanzanian Case Study.” *Journal of Contemporary African Studies*. Sept. 2006; 4 (3). Routledge. pp. 421.

31 Ibid. pp. 423.

32 Ellerman, David. “Autonomy-Respecting Assistance: Toward An Alternative Theory of Development Assistance.” *Review of Social Economy*. June 2004; LXII (2). Routledge. pp. 150.

implementation, have expressed a clear goal of increasing partner country ownership. In 2005, the U.S. signed the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness, expressing a commitment to “[r]espect partner country leadership and help strengthen their capacity to exercise it,” encourage policy harmonization, and align assistance with partner countries’ capacity, objectives, and needs.³³ The same year, USAID outlined nine principles to guide successful development projects, the first of which is ownership.³⁴ However, these commitments often stand at odds with the realities of foreign aid programming.

Increased partner country ownership of assistance is based on a variety of political, psychological, and development principles. In the interest of fostering international relationships rooted in mutual respect—an effort very much in the current economic and political interests of the U.S.—aid-receiving countries must be treated as equitable partners, not troublesome colonial subjects. Unilateral decision-making and the forceful imposition of U.S. values have greatly tarnished America's reputation in recent years, and top-down approaches to foreign assistance perpetuate this image in the global community. Furthermore, applying externally-supplied development practices in local contexts without the input of local officials and/or populations can foster physical and psychological dependency rather than cognitive self-reliance.³⁵ Ownership thus offers an opportunity to build partners' capacity to “own” and expand development programs while encouraging eventual self-sufficiency.

The development principles behind ownership are largely derived from these political and psychological assumptions. Logic suggests that no individuals are more qualified to identify the unique development needs, priorities, and contextually appropriate solutions than those within

33 “Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness: Ownership, Harmonisation, Alignment, Results and Mutual Accountability.” Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development. 2 Mar. 2005.

34 “USAID Primer: What We Do and How We Do It.” U.S. Agency for International Development. Jan. 2006. pp. 10.

35 Ellerman. pp. 156-157.

the country or community at hand. Empirical evidence, too, demonstrates that local involvement in the planning and implementation phases of assistance projects is an extremely accurate predictor of success. In a 1989 study, Kurt Finsterbusch and Warren E. Van Wicklin examined 52 aid projects, detecting significant correlation between greater community involvement, improved local capacity, and improved project effectiveness.³⁶ The brief overview of U.S. foreign aid policy in the following section offers further evidence of the link between local ownership and overall program effectiveness.

Though aid delivery methods that circumvent earmarking and implementation restrictions are often the subject of praise, they are rarely implemented. Direct budget support and sector wide approaches, which allow for greater flexibility and control of aid resources through the pooling of donor funds, are two such examples of underutilized approaches.³⁷ One specific example of ownership principles put in practice deserves particular attention. The Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) was created in 2004 and represents the most substantial experiment in owner-based assistance yet undertaken. The agency operates outside the direct purview of USAID and the State Department, administering Millennium Challenge Account (MCA) funding through what amounts to direct budget support.³⁸ Countries are selected for participation on the basis on policy performance and evidence of good governance, then are guided in writing and refining their country-specific development plans “in broad consultation within their society”.³⁹ Countries take ownership of the funding and arrange a “local MCA

36 Finsterbusch, Kurt and Warren A. Van Wicklin III. “Beneficiary Participation in Development Projects: Empirical Tests of Popular Theories.” *Economic Development and Cultural Change*. University of Chicago, 1989. pp. 591.

37 Cramer, Stein, and Weeks. pp. 416.

38 “MCC at a Glance.” Millennium Challenge Corporation Fact Sheet. 8 Sept. 2009. pp. 1.

39 Ibid. pp. 2.

accountable entity to manage and oversee all aspects of implementation”.⁴⁰ While the MCC remains a relatively under-funded aid agency, many development experts have lauded its mission to encourage country ownership and accountability in governance.

The MCC experiment has highlighted many of the practical challenges associated with increased partner country ownership of assistance, however. The agency has encountered one of the major problems that early studies of ownership-based initiatives identified: that ownership can significantly decrease aid effectiveness in unstable, underdeveloped, or highly corrupt environments. Finsterbusch and Van Wicklin's 1989 study links a number of environmental factors to the success or failure of improved ownership in a particular setting: among them, the level of development in the partner country, the skill level and organizational capacity of beneficiaries, and project size and complexity.⁴¹ Indeed, early assumptions about local capacity to implement MCC compacts were challenged in many instances, leading to delays in implementation. MCC leaders have recognized a need for greater communication between U.S. aid agents and partner countries, “allowing [the MCC] to co-assess [partner country] capacity to effectively carrying out the process, and then invest in their capacity to lead and design the project.”⁴²

Where problems of corruption or insufficient local capacity arise, many aid donors opt for more restrictive programs to ensure the proper and effective use of funds. Conditional lending—a form of which is practiced by the MCC, which has unusually selective criteria for aid recipients—is a prime example of donors' attempts to circumvent the problems associated with

40 Ibid.

41 Finsterbusch and Van Wicklin. pp. 574.

42 Interview with Kristin Penn, Senior Director for Agriculture and Rural Economy. Department of Compact Implementation, Millennium Challenge Corporation. 17 Nov. 2009.

increased local ownership.⁴³ While many activists and some development experts fault such conditional and heavily-restricted assistance, which motivates aid-seeking reforms rather than self-motivated changes in behaviors,⁴⁴ the corruption-free environments these reforms encourage are central to achieving aid effectiveness in ownership-oriented initiatives.

Increased partner country ownership of assistance does not guarantee greater investments in agricultural development or environmentally and socially responsible programming, of course. After all, the most fundamental principle behind recipient country ownership is that individual nations can evaluate their own circumstances and choose their own investment priorities. This represents both a key strength and weakness of increased partner country ownership. Underdeveloped nations with clear investment priorities may elect not to dedicate attention or funding to centrally important (but often overshadowed) issues of environmental sustainability or social equity. This problem can be solved, at least to a degree, by ensuring that the program planning and implementation phases are highly inclusive. Engaging a wide diversity of interests, including donor representatives, economically and politically marginalized groups, urban and rural residents, and women, can encourage more environmentally sustainable, economically beneficial, and socially responsible program choices.

Indeed, there is growing evidence to suggest that greater partner country ownership leads to more responsible investment—specifically, to greater demand for investment in the agricultural sector. Countries have expressed individual commitments to increased agricultural development through initiatives like the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP), introduced in 2003. The CAADP declares that “Agriculture-led development is fundamental to cutting hunger, reducing

⁴³ Cramer, Stein, and Weeks. pp. 418.

⁴⁴ Ellerman. pp. 153.

poverty (70 percent of which is in rural areas), generating economic growth, reducing the burden of food imports, and opening the way to an expansion of exports”, committing nations to making heavy investments in agriculture and establishing it as the central driver of African economic growth.⁴⁵

The MCC offers further evidence of partner countries' commitment to agricultural development. Since April 2005, “significant rural and agriculture-related investment obligations” have been made in nineteen of the MCC's twenty compact countries,⁴⁶ accounting for \$3.2 billion of the MCC's pledged funds and nearly half of the \$6.9 billion invested.⁴⁷ The portion of MCC funds dedicated to agricultural sector and rural economic development runs as high as 90%, while a majority of compact countries devote over 50% of their compact to this sector.⁴⁸ In Madagascar, where only \$0.5 million of USAID funds were dedicated to agriculture-led growth, the country-developed MCC compact focused wholly on agricultural development.⁴⁹

If MCC compact countries can be considered fairly accurate representations of poor and underdeveloped nations, the priorities of aid-receiving nations are related to increasing local capacity for food production and improved self sufficiency: infrastructure and road development, agricultural technical assistance, irrigation and water management system development, rural finance, land rights reform, and agricultural research.⁵⁰ In the context of NEPAD's priorities and MCC countries' funding designations, it is clear that U.S. appropriations for agricultural assistance are poor reflections of the needs of partner countries.

45 “Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme.” New Partnership for Africa's Development. July 2003. pp. 2-4.

46 Interview with Kristin Penn.

47 “MCC Investments Contribute to Long-Term Food Security.” Millennium Challenge Corporation Fact Sheet. 20 Mar. 2009. pp. 1.

48 Ibid. pp. 2.

49 Taylor and Howard. pp. 167.

50 “MCC Investments.” pp. 3.

This point highlights a—if not *the*—central problem to effective food security assistance. The multiplicity of interests that define aid policy, from the short-term strategic objectives of the State Department to the specific constituent demands represented by Congress and other U.S. government agencies, have hindered efforts at increasing country ownership and implementing more effective and sustainable food security initiatives. Though the earmarks and narrowly focused initiatives that dominate the U.S. foreign assistance policy landscape are able to treat the symptoms of major global problems and provide rapid and effective humanitarian relief in times of crisis, they seldom allow—much less encourage—recipient nations to address the root causes of their own problems.

With a growing global consensus around the need for greater partner country ownership and agricultural development in aid efforts, U.S. aid policymakers have struggled to separate themselves from the many special interests, Congressional restrictions, and politicized set-asides that have dominated assistance policies in the last two decades. Indeed, over the last year, a new administration has issued calls for yet another restructuring of foreign aid policies, stressing the need for aid effectiveness through country ownership and sustainable long-term development. The following section examines food security policy in the second half of the twentieth century, charting the changes in foreign assistance objectives and approaches that have led to recent re-evaluations of food security assistance policy.

Section II. The Evolution of Agricultural Assistance and Food Aid Policy, 1944-2000

1940s: Recipient Country Ownership over Early Food Security Assistance

The history of institutionalized foreign assistance in the U.S. begins in the late 1940s with

the Marshall Plan, when the goals of aid were more or less restricted to Europe's reconstruction following World War II. Assistance was viewed as a foreign policy tool to achieve strategic, economic, and humanitarian objectives, with the understanding that Europe's recovery and prosperity was closely tied to U.S. welfare.⁵¹ As European countries possessed the human resources and technical knowledge needed to achieve recovery, U.S. foreign assistance in the 1940s extended little further than food aid deliveries and the injection of capital into European economies—essentially direct budget support.⁵² While this approach aimed for temporary relief rather than long-term development, it gave Europe almost total ownership over the resources the U.S. granted it for recovery. Due in large part to the precedent set by the Marshall Plan and a self-sufficient Europe, early foreign assistance programs operated under the assumption that partner countries' efforts were more central to development than heavy U.S. involvement.⁵³ These ideas fall much in line with the principle of partner country ownership.

Though emergency food aid for humanitarian and disaster relief dates back to the early nineteenth century, when its distribution was based solely in principles of altruism and American exceptionalism, the objectives of food aid began to expand in the twentieth century. Amid a growing agricultural surplus in the U.S., Congressional legislation initiated the tradition of selling surplus goods abroad below market prices in 1935. These programs, as well as agricultural stockpiling for disaster relief, expanded significantly through the 1940s as U.S. food production increased, and came to involve private voluntary organizations (PVOs) and the Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC).⁵⁴ These programs were not utilized as explicit strategic foreign policy tools, however; they been designed with the dual objective of disposing of

51 Ruttan. pp. 4-6.

52 Butterfield. pp. 33.

53 Ibid. pp. 29.

54 Ruttan. pp. 151.

agricultural surplus and providing food to the world's hungry. As such, these initiatives appealed primarily to U.S. farmers and humanitarian interests, not political strategists.⁵⁵

A number of country projects that began in this era included technical assistance to farmers (alongside standard food aid shipments and cash transfers) through the Technical Cooperation Administration (TCA), seeking to expand local agricultural production and encourage self-sufficiency. As U.S. farming interests had not yet taken hold over food aid policy, these efforts were motivated primarily by political interests; most such assistance aimed to contain Soviet influence by fostering economic growth and building a positive U.S. image in strategic countries. TCA efforts “sought to improve agricultural policy, extend information, increase grain and fruit production, expand crop research, and improve irrigation” and “assisted livestock production, range management, agricultural education, including agricultural economics, farm credit, grain storage, marketing, [and] fertilizer supply”.⁵⁶ This era marked the first time food security assistance policies brought humanitarian and strategic goals into conflict with U.S. economic interests.⁵⁷

1950s: Farm Policy and Development Objectives

In the 1950s, food security assistance became a major feature of U.S. aid efforts and development initiatives. President Truman's Point Four reshaped aid policy, stressing the importance of economic development.⁵⁸ President Eisenhower carried this idea into action through liberalized trade policies and the increased subsidized disposal of agricultural surplus.⁵⁹

After lengthy debates over funding protocol, administrative procedure, and the reasoning behind

⁵⁵ Ibid. pp. 2, 8.

⁵⁶ Butterfield. pp. 123.

⁵⁷ Ruttan. pp. 152.

⁵⁸ Ruttan. pp. 89.

⁵⁹ Ruttan. pp. 150.

surplus disposal policies, Congress passed the Trade Development and Assistance Act of 1954 (P.L. 480), with the goals of developing new markets for U.S. exports, boosting national security, and promoting trade and development.⁶⁰ Over the course of the 1950s and 1960s, as U.S. grain surpluses reached new heights and P.L. 480 became a key source of agricultural exports, agricultural interests represented the primary voice advocating for food aid programming.⁶¹

By the end of the decade, U.S. assistance policy had begun a transition away from Cold War security and was moving toward longer-term development objectives. The Agricultural Trade Development and Assistance Extension Act of 1959 established the “Food for Peace” program, designating food aid not just a mechanism for agricultural surplus disposal, but a legitimate foreign policy tool.⁶² Despite these efforts to introduce long-term development concerns to the policymaking process, however, the P.L. 480 food aid program minimized the ability of recipient countries to articulate their individual needs and priorities.

The decade was not a total failure for proponents of country ownership, however. President Eisenhower introduced the Development Loan Fund program, which offered long-term, low interest loans and a low level of technical assistance in the planning process.⁶³ Furthermore, a number of early country development programs which featured agricultural assistance and capacity-building achieved a significant degree of success in the 1950s. In Afghanistan, the Helmand Valley project “provided the framework for an integrated rural development program” by creating conditions in which the region's farmers could prosper.⁶⁴ Though work was interrupted by the Soviet Union's invasion, the project stressed community

60 Ruttan. pp. 80.

61 Ruttan. pp. 190.

62 Ibid. pp. 156-159.

63 Butterfield. pp. 54-55.

64 Ibid. pp. 42-44.

empowerment and involvement to an unprecedented degree. In Chile, technical assistance programs of the 1940s that aimed to develop the country's "health, education, agriculture, public administration, industry," and other sectors led to the creation of Plan Chillan.⁶⁵ This program sought to "help farmers improve livestock, farm mechanization, soil conservation, and tree species" through training and knowledge sharing.⁶⁶ Similarly, a number of U.S. land grant universities linked with aid agencies in 1952 to begin a 20-year agricultural education program in India.⁶⁷

Perhaps the greatest success story in the history of ownership initiatives lies in Taiwan's Joint Sino-American Commission on Rural Reconstruction (JCRR). The JCRR, headed by three Taiwanese and two American representatives, promoted agricultural sector development and the equitable distribution of development benefits by responding directly to the needs of small farmers and encouraging the growth of local cooperatives.⁶⁸ The overarching rural development program included land tenure reform, infrastructure growth, industry, and education, and met with great success.⁶⁹

1960s: The Green Revolution and Food Aid's Foreign Policy Objectives

With the 1960s came a near-complete restructuring of U.S. foreign assistance policy. President Kennedy sought to expand and transform development programming—including the P.L. 480 program, which was placed under the newly created U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID)—from farm policy to foreign policy.⁷⁰ The U.S. Department of

⁶⁵ Ibid. pp. 44.

⁶⁶ Butterfield. pp. 44.

⁶⁷ Ibid. pp. 46.

⁶⁸ Ibid. pp. 48.

⁶⁹ Ibid. pp. 49.

⁷⁰ Ruttan. pp. 160.

Agriculture (USDA) began to lose its grip on food security assistance policy as USAID gained administrative power over the program. As a result, food aid became an increasingly central tool for the containment of Soviet influence. Reauthorized P.L. 480 legislation “reflected a determination by Congress, particularly the House, to exercise greater congressional control and supervision” of food aid programming.⁷¹ Due in part to this shift in power, food aid became a central focus of foreign assistance and White House national security policy.⁷²

President Johnson, as part of the War on Hunger, introduced an emphasis on recipient country ownership and long-term self-sufficiency by expanding and rechristening P.L. 480 “Food for Freedom” in 1966. This program featured self-help principles and checks on U.S. interests, establishing rules against the unreasonable dumping of U.S. surplus and introducing a requirement that food aid-receiving nations pursue agricultural development. As international attention shifted toward global food shortages and the importance of self-help, Johnson's reforms put P.L. 480 on track to becoming a more effective development assistance tool.⁷³ Despite these changes, many observers, including State Department officials, continued to view the P.L. 480 program as primarily a tool for surplus disposal.⁷⁴

The 1960s marked the beginning of the Green Revolution, which brought agricultural research to the forefront of U.S. food security assistance. American technology, developed by the USDA, was introduced through Asia's growing agricultural schools and organizations, boosting small farmers’ production levels in some of the world's most food-insecure regions.⁷⁵ The Technical Assistance Bureau (TAB), a program within USAID, collaborated with U.S. land grant universities to undertake agricultural research and development, provide field support, and

⁷¹ Ruttan. pp. 161.

⁷² Ibid. pp. 191.

⁷³ Ibid. pp. 162-165.

⁷⁴ Ibid. pp. 81.

⁷⁵ Butterfield. pp. 122.

disseminate knowledge in much of the developing world.⁷⁶ The Green Revolution introduced the use of fertilizers, pesticides, modern irrigation systems, and other agricultural technology to food-insecure regions, boosting local production and easing the effects of famine. While the movement accomplished a great deal in the struggle for food security and encouraged local self-sufficiency through agricultural development, it perpetuated dependency on externally-provided solutions.

Though the Green Revolution is typically considered the crowning success of food security assistance, much has changed since the 1960s. In sub-Saharan Africa, agricultural technologies and rural market support proved unreliable, while urban migration in Latin America complicated continued investment in rural agriculture. Even in Asia, the poster child of the Green Revolution, success in linking rural farmers to markets was limited. In an increasingly integrated global economy where oversupply and subsidies drive crop prices downward, continued investment in agricultural research and development and rural pricing systems has become much more complicated.⁷⁷ Since the 1960s, it has become increasingly apparent that increased production alone is insufficient to spur development and alleviate poverty.

1970s: New Directions toward Greater Ownership

Over the course of the 1970s and 1980s, farming interests reclaimed political sway through Congressional “subcommittees, organized along commodity lines, in the House Agriculture Committee”.⁷⁸ U.S. shipping interests, too, won a major victory in the 1985 Farm

⁷⁶ Ibid. pp. 115.

⁷⁷ *Foreign Aid in the National Interest: Promoting Freedom, Security, and Opportunity*. Washington: U.S. Agency for International Development, 2002. pp. 14-15.

⁷⁸ Ruttan. pp. 191.

Bill, when the share of food aid shipped in American vessels was raised from 50% to 75%.⁷⁹ P.L. 480 authorization and appropriations decisions, now subject to approval by the two agricultural committees, brought the influence of U.S. special interests to the forefront.

Meanwhile, the global food and oil crises of the 1970s, rising commodity prices and declining agricultural surpluses, and the devaluation of the dollar reshaped the world of foreign assistance. Food aid distribution slowed dramatically in the early part of the decade.⁸⁰ Growing opposition to the Vietnam War shifted public opinion away from foreign aid for security purposes while Nixon's New Directions inspired a policy shift toward poverty alleviation, basic human needs, and rural development.⁸¹ As such, humanitarian groups and PVOs were primary advocates of food aid in this era.⁸²

New Directions stressed that development must reflect social equity and improved quality of life for “groups on the margins of society” rather than strict economic growth.⁸³ As a result, agricultural development for increased self-sufficiency—boosting production on small scale farms through technical support, specifically—became a key focus of food security assistance. The P.L. 480 program was reshaped by the the International Development and Food Assistance Acts of 1975 and 1977, which increased U.S. food security assistance commitments, established the Title III Food for Development Program, and mandated that most aid recipients be extremely low-income countries.⁸⁴ Programming in Bangladesh, where food aid had long filled the gap between local production and the population’s needs, reflects these changes. USAID worked with the Bangladeshi government to develop a route to self-reliance through policy reform while

79 Ibid. pp. 193.

80 Ruttan. pp. 170.

81 Butterfield. pp. 114.

82 Ruttan. pp. 191.

83 Butterfield. pp. 177.

84 Ruttan. pp. 174-175.

meeting the country's immediate food needs. This approach stressed the need to "[make] Bangladesh farmers the top priority in their government's food and agriculture policies".⁸⁵ Though little in the essential structure of the P.L. 480 program changed under New Directions, its objectives had come to include long-term sustainability and greater benefits to aid-receiving nations.

At the same time, agricultural research became an international food security program focus through the new World Bank-chaired Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR)⁸⁶ and the USAID Collaborative Research Support Program.⁸⁷ These initiatives responded to criticisms of the Green Revolution by drawing farmers further into the research and development process and creating research partnerships that benefited both domestic and foreign agricultural sectors.⁸⁸ However, by funding research programs solely through American universities, these initiatives limited the opportunity for growth in foreign research and development sectors.

Some highly innovative efforts at boosting country ownership of assistance through the private also appeared in this era. The 1970s saw the emergence of microcredit initiatives in Asia, "a remarkably successful, highly innovative technical assistance program" that thrived on local ownership of aid.⁸⁹ Development experts of the decade advocated for a middle ground between traditional top-down assistance programs that treated the poor as beneficiaries and bottom-up approaches that insisted the poor could achieve development without outside technical assistance. Hugely successful microcredit programs filled this gap, demonstrating the

⁸⁵ Butterfield, pp. 212.

⁸⁶ The CGIAR undertakes agricultural research and investment, aiming to boost crop yields, improve crops' pest/herbicide resistance, and increase drought tolerance through biotechnology. The U.S. supplied a quarter of the group's annual budget.

⁸⁷ Butterfield, pp. 126.

⁸⁸ Ibid. pp. 127.

⁸⁹ Ibid. pp. 190.

effectiveness of “[a]ssisted self-reliance”.⁹⁰ Partner country ownership grew steadily in popularity as initiatives like these helped meet the developmental needs of aid recipients.

1980s-1990s: Aid Fatigue and Earmarking

In the 1980s, amid a nationwide recession and vastly increased food production in the developing world (largely thanks to the Green Revolution), development aid for agricultural self-sufficiency and long-term food security essentially evaporated. While assistance for economic, strategic, and military causes more than doubled,⁹¹ overall aid funding declined, and leaders in the developing world focused on urban and social sector programs rather than rural development.⁹² Over the next twenty years, USAID's staff resources dried up, agricultural specialists disappeared, and agricultural assistance to Africa dropped 85%.⁹³

Meanwhile, in a time of growing surplus, U.S. food aid policy shifted away from poverty alleviation and rural development to again emphasize surplus disposal.⁹⁴ The Food Security Act of 1985 overthrew many of the restrictions established in previous decades, introducing monetization requirements for food aid. Food aid was again distributed to strategically important countries with a heavy emphasis on benefits to U.S. farmers.⁹⁵ By the end of the decade, however, reauthorizations of P.L. 480 sought to orient food aid toward sustainable and long-term food security. The 1990 Farm Bill clearly established the goals of food aid as:

“(1) combating world hunger and malnutrition and their causes; (2) promoting broad-based, equitable, and sustainable development, including agricultural

90 Ibid. pp. 193-194.

91 Ruttan. pp. 10.

92 Butterfield. pp. 123; Taylor and Howard. pp. 7.

93 Bertini and Glickman. pp. 97.

94 Ruttan. pp. 176.

95 Ibid. pp. 177-179.

development; (3) expanding international trade; (4) developing and expanding export markets for US agricultural commodities; and (5) fostering and encouraging the development of private enterprise and democratic participation in developing countries.”⁹⁶

Additionally, USAID policy outlined three comprehensive elements of food security that Food for Peace should address: adequate food availability, possession of the resources to access food, and the proper health, infrastructure, and knowledge to effectively utilize food.⁹⁷ These policies demonstrated the growing recognition in the aid community that food security assistance must better address the interests of recipient nations and use a wide range of investments to build local capacity for food production, distribution, and consumption.

In the 1990s, U.S. food production slowed and development assistance, particularly to the agricultural sector, faded as a policy priority.⁹⁸ Though no specific sector received a great deal of attention from aid policymakers, agricultural assistance was particularly de-emphasized in favor of industrial development and earmarked social sector reforms.⁹⁹ By 2000, investments in African agriculture had plunged well below mid-1970s levels,¹⁰⁰ and funding for agricultural research in Africa dropped 75% between 1981 and 2000.¹⁰¹ Unfortunately, these trends emerged at a time when agricultural development was returning as a priority of African nations. This ideological shift culminated with the NEPAD's Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP), discussed in Section I, which placed agriculture squarely at the center of economic growth plans.¹⁰²

In this climate of budget cuts and weak public and government support for development

96 FFP Strategy. pp. 7.

97 FFP Strategy. pp. 11.

98 Butterfield. pp. 127.

99 Taylor and Howard. pp. 6.

100 Ibid. pp. 71.

101 Bertini and Glickman. pp. 98.

102 Taylor and Howard. pp. 7-8.

assistance, Congressional earmarks and set-asides became the primary vehicle of foreign aid distribution. The policy and programming shift toward presidential initiatives and restricted funds continued into the new millennium. The following section will examine food security assistance policy since 2000, charting the major changes in development theory and assistance approach that have reshaped U.S. aid ideologies.

Section III. Trends in Food Security Assistance Policy Since 2000

Recent Trends in Food Security Assistance and Policymaking

Foreign assistance in the last decade has been dominated by a handful of narrowly-focused programs through which earmarked funds are “stove-piped.” Since the establishment of the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) and President's Malaria Initiative (PMI), a tremendous portion of the U.S. foreign aid budget has been funneled toward these highly specific health initiatives.¹⁰³ Earmarks—within both legislation and Congressional appropriations reports—have come to comprise over 90% of USAID development assistance to specific areas (building trade capacity, biotechnology research, microenterprise, biodiversity, etc.) that may not reflect the needs and priorities of individual countries.¹⁰⁴ Though these “big pushes” have enabled significant progress in the fight against specific diseases and development issues, they create budgetary shortfalls for long-term development projects like agriculture. Over the last two decades, general investments in agriculture have consistently lost ground to more “politically fashionable projects”—signatures of the age of earmarks and set-asides.¹⁰⁵ Perhaps worst of all, these politicized programs have cut aid-receiving countries out of the planning process, offering largely externally-supplied solutions to largely externally-identified problems.

103 Congressional Budget Justification: Foreign Operations. Department of State. FY 2010. Book 1. pp. 28-29.

104 Taylor and Howard. pp. 32.

105 Bertini and Glickman. pp. 96.

A key reason for this trend is the lack of oversight by the House and Senate authorization committees on foreign relations. Fast-track appropriations procedures adopted in the last twenty years have led appropriations committees to more readily fund selected, heavily publicized education and health programs that are aid priorities of an elected Congress and a very politically pointed Executive Branch. While USAID's allocations for agricultural development in Africa decreased 3% between 2000 and 2004 when adjusted for inflation, allocations for health (through initiatives like PEPFAR and PMI) grew 51%. Correspondingly, the Child Health and Survival budget account grew by 116%, far surpassing the 40% growth in the Development Assistance account.¹⁰⁶ USAID, USDA, and Development Account funding for agricultural development have also stagnated.¹⁰⁷ More recently, Congressional support for the Obama administration's new agricultural development efforts has proved limited as well; the House cut nearly \$500 million and the Senate cut \$160 million from the President's 2010 food security budget request. Furthermore, increasing yields in the developing world and agricultural subsidies in the developed world have pulled crop prices downward, weakening U.S. and international support for further agricultural research and reducing already paltry funding for the Consultative Group for International Agricultural Research (CGIAR).¹⁰⁸

P.L. 480, meanwhile, remains one of the most heavily and consistently funded of U.S. development assistance programs; in 2006, the U.S. supplied 43% of the UN World Food Program (WFP)'s contributions and, in 2005, 70% of its in-kind donations through Title II emergency aid.¹⁰⁹ Title II has grown significantly, and now represents the second largest source

106 Taylor and Howard. pp. 77.

107 Ibid. pp. 88, 91, 163.

108 *Foreign Aid in the National Interest*. pp. 68.

109 2007 GAO Report. pp. 7, 14.

of agricultural assistance funds after the USAID Bureau for Africa account.¹¹⁰ As such, Food for Peace has been labeled “the single greatest humanitarian effort in history”.¹¹¹ While clauses were introduced to P.L. 480 legislation to ensure that programming does not negatively impact local agricultural production, market, or commercial imports,¹¹² the 2002 Farm Bill maintained requirements related to U.S. procurement and shipment, monetization, and value-added in non-emergency food aid.¹¹³ Thus, though the program indeed looks impressive on paper, its success in addressing the deeper causes of food insecurity—and using aid funds to combat food security effectively—is subject to debate.

Foreign Assistance Policies and Strategies under the Bush Administration

From the Bush administration emerged an unprecedented set of policy priorities redefining the objectives and approaches of foreign aid programs. The administration declared the food assistance program a reform priority in 2001, convening an interagency committee to review programming related to food security.¹¹⁴ The committee requested that the primary objective of food aid be “the direct feeding of genuinely hungry populations”, that USDA-managed Section 416(b) assistance be de-emphasized so programs would rely less “on unpredictable surplus commodity availability”, and that improved provisions be introduced “to avoid any potential displacement of U.S. or third country commercial sales”.¹¹⁵ Additionally, USAID Administrator Andrew Natsios vocally advocated for long-term economic growth and poverty reduction through agricultural development, adding to the demand for food security

110 Taylor and Howard. pp. 84.

111 Bertini and Glickman. pp. 96.

112 FFP Strategy. pp. 18.

113 “Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002 [2002 Farm Bill].” H.R. 2646/P.L. 107-171, 107th Congress; Simmons (2007). pp. 11.

114 FFP Strategy. pp. 15.

115 Ibid. pp. 16.

assistance in the best interest of recipients.¹¹⁶

Following the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks, the administration expressed a commitment to achieving security through economic growth, elevating development to an equal position with defense and diplomacy. These programs were designated the “three Ds” of U.S. foreign policy, and agricultural development became a central component of development programming. A 2002 USAID publication cites improved agricultural productivity—coupled with sustainable practices—as key to poverty reduction, development, and increased access to food.¹¹⁷ It further notes the need for U.S. leadership in reviving agricultural research and development, sharing knowledge through universities, and instituting responsible foreign policy initiatives (particularly with regard to subsidies and other agricultural trade barriers).¹¹⁸ USAID's 2004 agricultural strategy further embodied these sentiments, emphasizing the need for expanded trade opportunities, sustainable agriculture, agricultural R&D, and greater knowledge sharing.¹¹⁹ With Natsios at the head of USAID and agricultural development raised to a higher priority in government policymaking, it appeared sustainable food security initiatives might finally receive the attention they lacked over the course of the 1980s and 1990s.

The Bush administration offered a number of commitments to increasing partner country ownership of assistance, many of which were discussed in Section I. The creation of the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) in 2004 initiated a new experiment in the world of foreign aid—a practical test of country ownership principles. In 2005, the U.S. signed the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness, and again expressed its dedication to ownership principles in the 2008 Accra Agenda for Action. Additionally, the government was increasingly prepared to

116 Taylor and Howard. pp. 14.

117 *Foreign Aid in the National Interest*. pp. 11-12.

118 Ibid. pp. 69.

119 Taylor and Howard. pp. 42-43.

acknowledge the connection between rampant earmarking, reduced recipient country ownership of aid, and failed foreign assistance policies. USAID's 2004 White Paper addressing foreign assistance blatantly criticizes such restricted funds for greatly limiting recipient country control over resources:

“While earmarks, directives, and initiatives arguably make positive development contributions, such funding is often associated with restrictions and provisions that make it difficult to adhere to principles of aid effectiveness. They often get in the way of allocating aid selectively; eliciting recipient ownership and participation; focusing on institutional development to alleviate absorptive capacity constraints; reinforcing donor harmonization and coordination, and encouraging timely graduation. Accordingly, for aid to best support transformational development, donors need flexibility to adhere to best practices.”¹²⁰

In this context, serious foreign assistance policy reform seemed achievable.

Despite this progress, however, the reorganization of development agencies during the Bush years threatened to hamper efforts at long-term sustainable development and increased recipient country ownership. In realigning the budget creation and agenda-setting processes of USAID and the State Department in 2006, the administration aimed to make assistance more consistent with foreign policy objectives and generally more effective—using aid to create an environment where it would no longer be needed. The first strategic objective outlined in the 2006 USAID Policy Framework for Bilateral Foreign Aid relates to transformational development and boosting the capacity of partner countries to “sustain further economic and social progress without depending on foreign aid”.¹²¹ Such work would be funded with “resources... subject to—at most—very broad sectoral earmarks or directives and very flexible program guidance,” applied under a strategy that emphasizes partner country ownership over aid

120 “U.S. Foreign Aid: Meeting the Challenges of the 21st Century.” White Paper. U.S. Agency for International Development. Jan. 2004. pp. 14.

121 “USAID Policy Framework for Bilateral Foreign Aid: Implementing Transformational Diplomacy through Development.” U.S. Agency for International Development. Jan 2006. pp. 1.

resources.¹²² Secretary of State Rice stressed the administration's commitment to this strategy in an address to USAID in January 2006:

“Transformational diplomacy is root in partnership, not paternalism—in doing things *with* other people, not *for* them. We seek to use America’s diplomatic power to help foreign citizens to better their *own* lives, and to build their *own* nations, and to transform their *own* futures.”¹²³

Though these statements express a commitment to ownership and sustainability, the alignment of the State Department and USAID planning and budget development processes has brought the two organizations' time horizons into stark contrast. Long-term development efforts are now embedded within the administration's short-term political goals, raising questions about USAID's continued ability to operate under genuine development principles and observe aid best practices. The relationship between these two agencies, currently under consideration in the Quadrennial Diplomacy and Development Review (QDDR) and in Presidential Study Directive Number 7 on U.S. Global Development Policy (PSD-7),¹²⁴ may dramatically impact the future of development assistance and food security initiatives.

As the State Department and USAID entered a turf war over development assistance objectives, the P.L. 480 program pushed onward. The USAID Office of Food for Peace released a comprehensive four-year strategy to better define its policies and align objectives with wider food security assistance programs. The strategic objective of P.L. 480 for 2006-2010 was determined to be “Food security in vulnerable populations reduced”, a goal consistent with the

122 USAID Policy Framework. pp. 7.

123 Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice. “New Direction for US Foreign Assistance” USAID speech. 18 Jan. 2006.

124 The QDDR is a periodic review process initiated by Secretary of State Clinton to evaluate and streamline foreign assistance operations between the State Department and U.S. Agency for International Development, designed in model of the Department of Defense Quadrennial Defense Review. PSD-7 is an unprecedented project to generate a national development strategy, set clear priorities and objectives, define implementation strategies, and clarify organization. Both initiatives were introduced in 2009. (*USAID Frontlines*: “Insights from Acting Administrator Alonzo Fulgham” Nov. 2009)

government-wide focus on fragile states.¹²⁵ Changes to Food for Peace in the 2008 Farm Bill also reflected an effort (albeit half-hearted) to develop a more sustainable program focused on recipient countries. A pilot program for local and regional procurement designated \$60 million over four years to be used for the purchase of food for aid in local markets. The bill also proposed that a minimum dollar level for non-emergency food aid be set.¹²⁶ While these measures represented important gestures, they were only minor commitments to change in a highly flawed program. Business continued largely as usual, with the U.S. devoting over \$2 billion in food aid in 2008 to absorb the shock of the economic crisis—a figure consistent with funding trends of the last decade.¹²⁷

The food security assistance landscape changed dramatically in 2007 as a global financial crisis and food crisis set in. After decades of chronic food insecurity punctuated with periods of famine and food riots, it had become increasingly apparent that “[f]ood aid is no longer an effective method for dealing with agricultural surplus” or combating global hunger.¹²⁸ Indeed, a growing body of evidence shows that the P.L. 480 program has become too administratively burdensome, controversial, narrowly defined, and generally costly to be a practical solution to global food insecurity.¹²⁹ In 2007, a Government Accountability Office (GAO) evaluation of U.S. food aid reported that growing demand for food aid and rising costs associated with its transport caused a 52% decrease in delivered tonnage between 2002 and 2007, despite fairly constant funding. Non-commodity programs costs now account for 65% of P.L. 480

125 FFP Strategy. pp. 23.

126 “Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 [2008 Farm Bill].” H.R. 6124/P.L. 110-246 , 110th Congress.

127 Bertini and Glickman. pp. 94; 2007 GAO Report. pp. 1.

128 Ruttan. pp. 196.

129 Ibid. pp. 199-201.

expenditures.¹³⁰ As such, it would be unreasonable for the Food for Peace program to be a centerpiece of the new administration's food security efforts. In the following section, early statements and strategies of the Obama administration pertaining to country ownership and sustainable food security initiatives will be outlined, providing a context for suggested policy reforms.

Foreign Assistance Policies and Strategies of the Obama Administration

The Obama administration has repeatedly expressed a commitment to changing tack and treating the causes—not just the symptoms—of global food security through collaborative development programs. Early statements and budget requests from government officials reflect a renewed dedication to agricultural development, greater partnership between aid donors and recipients, and improved partner country ownership of food security programs. Three months into his term, the President, recognizing that agricultural investments contribute to food security and poverty alleviation, requested that Congress double assistance funding for agricultural development in FY2010.¹³¹ Though Congressional appropriations committees softened this commitment, the FY2010 budget request to Congress set agricultural sector development, the creation of enabling policy environments, revitalized R&D programming, infrastructural reforms, and other productivity-boosting programs as the administration's highest priorities in development assistance.¹³²

Yet this budget request reveals that many traditional structures within food security assistance remain in-tact. In the budget request to Congress, assistance for food security is

130 2007 GAO Report. pp. 1.

131 "Doubling Financial Resources Available for Agricultural Development." White House Fact Sheet. Office of the Press Secretary. 2 Apr. 2009.

132 Congressional Budget Justification: Foreign Operations. Department of State. FY2010. Book 1. pp. 32.

divided between aid to respond to food insecurity—primarily food aid for short-term humanitarian relief—and a small fund to address the root causes of hunger—development-oriented assistance. The requested funds to establish food security through agriculture and related programming totaled \$1.36 billion in FY2010, spread over four accounts.¹³³ Of \$1.99 billion dedicated to addressing *existing* food insecurity, \$1.69 billion was allotted to P.L. 480 Title II.¹³⁴ This program, in its modern incarnation, includes both disaster-related food aid and “non-emergency, development-oriented resources to help address the underlying causes of food security”.¹³⁵ The FY2010 Request incorporates nearly half a billion dollars more than previous years for anticipated emergency use,¹³⁶ but only requests an incremental increase—\$25 million over FY2009—for non-emergency aid. Emergency funds thus comprise \$1.29 billion of Title II’s \$1.69 billion.¹³⁷ These figures demonstrate that short-term, relief-oriented food aid remains the cornerstone of U.S. food security initiatives, despite the administration’s policy commitments to agricultural development.

Looking beyond the administration’s emphasis on humanitarian assistance in food security programming, allocations to specific geographic regions reflect somewhat more careful consideration of the need for agricultural development. The FY2010 Development Assistance account request for Africa would have increased funding to \$1.16 billion, up from \$678 million in FY2008. Requested funding for agricultural assistance for economic growth is triple FY2008 levels and 125% above FY2009 levels. Meanwhile, funding to the P.L. 480 account is slated to drop from \$1.82 billion in 2008 to \$273 million in FY2010.¹³⁸ While these FY2010 funding

133 Ibid. Book 1. pp. 195.

134 Ibid.

135 Ibid. Book 1. pp. 99.

136 CBJ Book 1. pp. 99

137 Ibid. Book 1. pp. 100.

138 CBJ Book 2. pp. 2.

requests for Africa reflect a shift away from emergency food aid in favor of agricultural development, earmarked health initiatives still eclipse agricultural assistance. At \$4.82 billion of Africa's \$6.74 billion allocation, the funds available for "Investing in People" through education and health programs—namely PEPFAR and PMI—vastly exceed those for agricultural development.¹³⁹ Earmarking practices obviously remain a major aspect of development assistance policy.

The Obama administration's dedication to sustainable food security initiatives emerged in large part from a growing international consensus on the importance of partner country ownership of assistance and self-reliance. In 2008, donor countries issued the Accra Agenda for Action to supplement the three-year-old Paris Declaration. In sum, the Accra Agenda sought to renew stalled efforts at improving country ownership over development efforts. This would be accomplished through a renewed commitment to broadening "country-level dialogue on development" by better engaging parliaments, local authorities, and civil society, and to strengthening and utilizing local capacity to as great a degree as possible.¹⁴⁰

The July 2009 G8 "plus" meeting in L'Aquila, Italy, brought this commitment further into focus. Among other things, summit attendees pledged to keep agriculture and food security at the top of national, regional, and international policy agendas, "partner with vulnerable countries and regions to help them develop and implement their own food security strategies," and "focus on agriculture and rural development by promoting sustainable production, productivity and rural economic growth".¹⁴¹ The summit accord, endorsed by U.S. representatives to the conference, reflected a commitment to increased partner country ownership and the reversal of trends

139 Ibid. pp. 4.

140 Accra Agenda for Action. Third High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness. 4 Sept. 2008. pp. 2-3.

141 "L'Aquila Joint Statement on Global Food Security: L'Aquila Food Security Initiative (AFSI)." United Nations L'Aquila G8 Summit. 10 July 2009. pp. 1-2.

diverting development assistance away from national financing and agriculture.¹⁴² Significantly, the statement outlined “a global effort whose core principles are country ownership and effectiveness”.¹⁴³ By participating in the L'Aquila summit and signing the Joint Statement, the U.S. demonstrated its dedication to joining international efforts at improving food security.

Next came the challenge of putting these ideas into practice, of course—a process which is very much still underway. Two months after the L'Aquila Joint Statement's issuance, Secretary of State Clinton and UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon issued a follow-up proposal to move forward the food security initiative outlined in July. To put agreed-upon principles into policy, this document pledged to adhere to the L'Aquila statement and, correspondingly:

“Intensify support for ongoing efforts to advance effective country-led and regional strategies; development country investment plans and programs to achieve the goals of these strategies; ensure mutual accountability through public benchmarks, indicators, and a peer review framework to measure progress; and develop a flexible financing architecture that includes well-coordinated bilateral and multilateral mechanisms to support these integrated country-led strategies and investment plans”¹⁴⁴

This proposal helped bridge the space between the L'Aquila summit and the realm of U.S. policy, putting ownership at the center of official administration statements regarding food security.

In September, Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack and Secretary Clinton traveled to Africa and expanded on the Obama administration's commitment to improving food security assistance policy. Somewhat surprisingly, given his position, Vilsack's speech called for serious re-evaluation and reform of past efforts focused on food aid:

“We need a comprehensive approach focused on sustainability. We must address

142 Ibid. pp. 2.

143 Ibid. pp. 4.

144 “Partnering for Food Security: Moving Forward.” U.N. Secretary General Ban Ki-moon and U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton. United Nations L'Aquila G8 Summit. Sept. 2009.

not only increasing availability of food by helping people and countries produce what they need, we must make food accessible to those who need it, and teach people to utilize it properly so that they make the most of it. Plans must be country-led. Food security efforts must be country-driven and focused at the local and community level. Farmers in small villages are responsible for much of the food produced globally and must be fully engaged at the earliest stages of the process for planning agriculture development.”¹⁴⁵

Secretary Clinton's comments in response stressed the Obama administration's dedication to improved country ownership and emphasized “local markets buying from local farmers,” so as to achieve economic growth and poverty reduction through agricultural sector development.¹⁴⁶ At least in rhetoric, the USDA and State Department are on board with the administration's commitments to improved aid effectiveness.

The L'Aquila principles were further reflected in the administration's new Global Hunger and Food Security Initiative (GHFSI), which aims “to sustainably reduce chronic hunger, raise the incomes of the rural poor, and reduce the number of children suffering from under-nutrition”.¹⁴⁷ Though the initiative is only in the early stages of development, these goals reflect a clear commitment to fighting both hunger and poverty in the long-term and embody an unusually strong emphasis on development.

The program outlines five principles in its mission, the first of which is to “Comprehensively address the underlying causes of hunger and under-nutrition” rather than treat its symptoms. This principle rejects “short term interventions,” endorsing instead a renewed emphasis on agriculture-led growth, poverty reduction, and local capacity-building to reduce long-term vulnerability to natural and human disasters. The Consultation Document stresses the

¹⁴⁵ Vilsack, Tom. “Agriculture Secretary Vilsack Discusses Obama Administration's Commitment to Global Food Security at AGOA Forum in Kenya.” U.S. Department of Agriculture Office of Communications. 5 Aug. 2009.

¹⁴⁶ Clinton, Hillary Rodham. “Remarks with Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack and Kenya's Minister for Agriculture William Ruto at the Kenya Agricultural Research Institute.” U.S. Department of State. 5 Aug. 2009.

¹⁴⁷ “Global Hunger and Food Security Initiative.” Consultation Document. Bureau of Public Affairs, U.S. Department of State. 28 Sept. 2009.

need for humanitarian food aid to lay the foundation for long-term action on food insecurity, while encouraging local and regional procurement in situations where it is possible and logical. The impact this commitment will have on P.L. 480 policies has yet to be seen.

The next two principles underlying the GHFSI, to “Invest in country-led plans” for development and investment and “Strengthen strategic coordination—globally, regionally, and locally,” emphasize the importance of improved country ownership over food security initiatives.¹⁴⁸ These perspectives are further reflected in four of the GHFSI's ten strategic choices. These four points emphasize community- and country-led planning processes, capacity building, and infrastructural and market development that better supports small-scale producers (particularly women).¹⁴⁹

Despite the ample number of commitments by the President, Secretary of State, and Secretary of Agriculture, the future of country ownership initiatives are uncertain. Many of the administration's espoused principles have yet to find outlet in legislation or field-level implementation. Several of the GHFSI's principles are embodied in the Global Food Security Act of 2009, currently under consideration in the Senate.¹⁵⁰ Among other things, the bill proposes the selection of a Special Coordinator for Food Security to ensure that USAID, USDA and other parties are not operating at cross purposes. It also makes specific pledges to expand investments in agriculture, better coordinate with the private sector, and encourage self-sufficiency in aid-receiving nations. Furthermore, the bill includes a strong mandate for agricultural research and the revival of university programs to promote knowledge transfer. While the Global Food Security Act indeed demonstrates progress toward increased partner country ownership of food

148 Ibid.

149 Ibid.

150 Casey, Senator Robert P. “Casey Stresses Urgent Need for Action on Global Food Security.” Senator Casey Press Room. 29 Oct. 2009; “Global Food Security Act of 2009.” S. 384, 111th Congress.

security assistance, its passage—and that of subsequent legislation to put GHFSI principles into practice—may prove difficult in the context of Congressional earmarks, U.S. special interests, and increased State Department control of USAID development activities.

The history of food security assistance illustrates the multiplicity of interests involved in policymaking and the conflicting objectives, approaches, and outcomes that inevitably result. Since the institutionalization of foreign assistance following World War I, a series of food aid programs have aimed to simultaneously meet the short-term strategic objectives of the State Department, economic interests of the USDA, political demands of Congress and other U.S. government agencies, and needs of the developing world. Unsurprisingly, these programs have had a poor record of success. As such, a thorough evaluation and reconfiguration of food security assistance policy is long overdue.

Though the Bush administration expressed commitment to such reforms, the restructuring of aid agencies and expanded use of Congressional earmarks hindered efforts at implementing more effective and sustainable food security initiatives. Over the last year, numerous international commitments and U.S. assistance strategies—from the L'Aquila Accord to President Obama's Global Hunger and Food Security Initiative—have centrally featured principles of recipient country ownership and long-term development. However, with the continued presence of the powerful interests responsible for past policy decisions, the new administration's challenge will be to turn this rhetoric into usable policy. The U.S. needs complex policy solutions that address the complex causes of food insecurity; without a doubt, increased partner country ownership must represent the core principle behind these policies.

The final section of this paper begins with an action memo to President Obama, offering

policy recommendations to turn these principles into action and guide the U.S. toward more effective and sustainable food security assistance. With the understanding that current food security assistance policies are ineffective and unsustainable, the authors propose the creation of a new Office of Global Food Security to oversee all forms of U.S. food security assistance and ensure that aid policies and practices align with the administration's commitments to long-term development and increased partner country ownership of assistance.

Steps to Improving the Impact and Sustainability of U.S. Food Security Assistance

Action Memorandum to President Barack Obama

Date: December 14, 2009

From: Food Security Assistance Reform Team

Foreign assistance policy/program/structural problem needing reform:

Over the last fifty years, U.S. food security assistance policies have failed to significantly impact global numbers of the food-insecure. The U.S. government has implemented several food assistance programs to address this problem, but few have encouraged sustainable development, partner country ownership of aid programs, or long-term food security for the developing world.

Proposed reforms to address the problem:

In order to create a food assistance policy that meets both the needs of the world's hungry and aligns with the Obama administration's policy priorities and operating principles, the reform team proposes the creation of the Office of Global Food Security to coordinate food security and food aid policy planning and implementation between all involved agencies and contractors. Eight bureaus within this office will address: the creation of country-driven development strategies; local and regional procurement and relations with Congress; relations with the private sector; agricultural research; evaluation; sustainable development; outreach with USDA, USAID, and the State Department; and public relations.

Assumptions and rationale for success of the recommended reforms:

- Food security assistance programs' objectives and approaches are uncoordinated due to the multiplicity of U.S. interests involved in policymaking.
- Top-down food aid policies cater to the interests of donor nations without due consideration of local needs, while local ownership improves aid effectiveness and sustainability.
- Today's food crisis necessitates policies that better represent the interests of aid recipients and encourage bottom-up approaches to food security.
- Agricultural sector development effectively combats poverty and chronic under-development while fostering global food security.
- The administration will be able to gather the support of Congress, aid agencies, and domestic industries with an interest in food security assistance.

Downside and potential problems with implementing the proposed reform:

- Resistance from the State Department, Congress, USDA, USAID, and U.S. agricultural and shipping interests over changes to entrenched food security assistance policies and transfers of authority.
- Lack of capacity (local and USG) to develop and implement country-led food security strategies or undertake bottom-up development strategies.

Names of team members: Caitlin Crotty Miriam Meyer Rachel Voss

Approved: _____ **Date** _____
 (Signature of President Barack Obama)

Disapproved : _____ **Date** _____

Glossary of Select Terms

B/AR – Bureau of Agricultural Research
B/FSR – Bureau of Food Security Relations
B/FSS – Bureau of Food Security Strategy
B/LRP – Bureau of Local and Regional Procurement
B/O – Bureau of Outreach
B/PE – Bureau of Policy Evaluation
B/PSR – Bureau of Private Sector Relations
B/SD – Bureau of Sustainable Development
GAO – Government Accountability Office
GHFSI – President Obama's Global Hunger and Food Security Initiative
GM – genetically modified (crops)
LRPs – Local and Regional Procurement Program
MCC – Millennium Challenge Corporation
OGFS – Office of Global Food Security
P.L. 480 – Public Law 480; Food for Peace [food aid program]
NGOs/PVOs – non-governmental organizations/private voluntary organizations
USAID – U.S. Agency for International Development
USDA – U.S. Department of Agriculture
USG – U.S. government

Agroecology – the use of traditional agricultural techniques to form a whole-systems approach to agricultural development that takes into consideration the socio, economic, and environmental impacts of agriculture in a particular region. Common practices include biodiversity, soil conservation, biomass recycling, and microclimate management.¹⁵¹

Local and Regional Procurement - "the purchase of food aid by donors in countries affected by disasters and food crises or in a different country within the same region. Procurements of food aid can be categorized geographically as (1) *international*: donor-financed purchases of food aid in world markets, which may include both developed and developing countries; (2) *regional*: donor-financed purchases of food aid in a different country in the same region; or (3) *local*: donor-financed purchases of food aid in countries affected by disasters and food crises."¹⁵²

Monetization - the sale, for foreign currencies, of U.S.-procured, non-emergency Title II P.L. 480 food aid in recipient nations. Funds procured are reinvested in local development projects.

Terminator Technology - seeds that have been genetically modified so that seeds produced in resultant generations are sterile. Before seeds are given to consumers, they are treated with toxins that will kill the embryos of mature seeds before harvest. As a result, farmers are forced to buy new seeds every year.¹⁵³

151 Altieri, Miguel A. "Agroecology: principles and strategies for designing sustainable farming systems." University of California, Berkeley.

152 "International Food Assistance: Local and Regional Procurement Projects Provides Opportunities to Enhance U.S. Food Aid, but Challenges May Constrain Its Implementation." U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2009. pp. 2.

153 "Terminator Technology for Transgenic Crops." Virginia Cooperative Extension, Virginia Tech University.

I. Policy Requiring Reform: Existing Problems in Food Security Assistance Policy

USG efforts to increase food security have made little or no impact on numbers of the world's hungry, yet officials forecast the world will require significant increases in food production to meet the needs of a growing population. There are a number of problems with existing food security policies. First, P.L. 480 emergency food aid, procured in the U.S. and generally shipped by U.S. vessels, has long overshadowed assistance that encourages long-term agricultural development and could prevent future crises. Furthermore, the monetization of non-emergency P.L. 480 food aid in local markets lowers crop prices, discourages local farming, and fosters continued dependency on external food assistance.¹⁵⁴ However, lobbying efforts by U.S. interest groups have prevented critical evaluation of these policies.

Second, the emphasis on food aid as a development and foreign policy tool excludes partner country voices from program planning and implementation. The U.S. has expressed its commitment to increased recipient country ownership of assistance through the Paris Declaration, Accra Agenda, and L'Aquila Accord. To abide by acknowledged aid best practices and increase the effectiveness of food security assistance, the USG must enable aid receiving countries to assess their individual needs and set assistance priorities.

Third, policymakers have expressed an attachment to technological "quick fixes" like genetically modified (GM) crops, which put an unreasonable financial burden on small farmers but offer no better results than more sustainable local approaches to agriculture. Issues such as licensing, patenting, and terminator technologies raise prices and keep farmers from being able to purchase GM seeds and their needed fertilizers every year. And any technologies that may aid farmers in the future will be unattainable because of the purchasing power of developing countries.

President Obama has made food security a priority of his administration, introducing a Global Hunger and Food Security Initiative that expresses clear commitments to increased agricultural development, sustainable solutions, and recipient country involvement in the program planning process. However, due to a lack of policy coordination within the USG, there continues to be much talk but very little action. Senator Lugar's proposed Global Food Security Act, if passed, will transfer many of these ideas into policy. While we do not accept all of the proposed policy reforms set forth in this Act, we do believe that the Global Food Security Act is a basis for important, necessary changes off of which our proposed reforms can and will build.

Ensuring food security is not only an issue of aid for the world's malnourished; it is also a matter of national security. The world witnessed chaos when food prices surged in 2008. There were riots around the world – even in developed countries. Senator Lugar's Act finds that “agriculture has been a driver of economic growth as the foundation of industry and commerce

154 Simmons (2009).

in developed countries.”¹⁵⁵ Thus, we stress for further involvement in local agriculture programs. It is imperative that the U.S. government reform its currently ineffective and unsustainable methods of food security assistance.

Leaders around the world acknowledge that world hunger is a worldwide crisis. Issues of food security go further than the fact that developing countries are unable to provide for themselves, so solutions must reach further than increased agricultural production. It is time to stop talking and move towards sustainable actions to conquer world hunger. We need a bottom up approach to tackle the core problems which continue to plague the issue of food security. We propose a number of policy reforms which, if implemented, could improve USG food security assistance programs.

II. Proposed Reform: Policy Options for Addressing these Obstacles

In order to better align U.S. food security assistance policies with the administration's aid strategies, international commitments (including the Paris Declaration and L'Aquila Accord), and the new Global Hunger and Food Security Initiative's (GHFSI) operating principles,¹⁵⁶ the authors suggest the President establish an Office of Global Food Security (OGFS) to house the Special Coordinator for Food Security, a cabinet-rank position appointed by the President and confirmed by the Senate. This office will coordinate food security and food aid policy planning and implementation between the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC), and State Department. As Senator Lugar's Global Food Security Act similarly proposes the appointment of a Special Coordinator, the authors recommend the President support this aspect of the bill.

The OGFS will be assigned the responsibility of coordinating U.S. global food security initiatives. In essence, its core duties will be to align the policies, planning, and budgeting processes of food security initiative implementing agencies with the administration's priorities: long-term development assistance, greater partner country ownership of assistance, and more sustainable development approaches. These strategic transitions will reduce the likelihood of future food insecurity, alleviate poverty, lessen dependency on foreign assistance, and bolster national and global security. While the OGFS will be responsible for policy coordination and oversight, it is important to note that USG agencies currently involved in food security initiatives will continue to act as policy implementers.

The OGFS will be broken into eight subunits that oversee: the creation of country-driven development strategies; local and regional procurement initiatives and relations with Congress; relations with the private sector; agricultural research; evaluation; sustainable development programming; outreach to USDA, USAID, and the State Department; and public relations. These sub-offices are meant to work not only in conjunction with the government agencies responsible for their policies' implementation, but also with each other to make sure that policies work *with* and not *against* one another.

¹⁵⁵ “Global Food Security Act of 2009.” Sec. 296.

¹⁵⁶ “Global Hunger and Food Security Initiative.” Consultation Document.

In addition to the creation of the OGFS, we encourage the administration to support several sections of the Lugar-Casey Global Food Security Act (S. 384). However, for the proposed legislation that we do not believe will promote more effective, more sustainable food security approaches, particularly Section 202, we recommend that the administration call for amendments to the Act that encourage, but do not mandate, biotechnology research.

III. Implementation of Proposed Reforms

I. The Office of Global Food Security

The creation of an Office of Global Food Security (OGFS) and appointment of a Special Coordinator for Food Security—a position described in the proposed Global Food Security Act—will fill a prominent gap in the U.S. foreign assistance leadership structure. Global food security is a top foreign policy priority of the Obama administration, yet food security assistance remains one of the more disjointed and ineffective foreign aid programs in operation today. The OGFS will support the Coordinator's efforts in the various ways necessary to "oversee implementation of a comprehensive food security strategy."¹⁵⁷

The duties of this office will resemble those of the existing Office of the Global AIDS Coordinator. Though implementation of food security assistance policy will be left to the agencies now responsible for it, the OGFS will oversee these efforts. While administration officials have expressed their policy priorities, preferred implementation strategies, and guiding principles for U.S. food security assistance, these concepts have yet to find expression in legislation. The OGFS will be assigned the responsibility of overseeing this process and ensuring that present and future food security assistance programs abide by acknowledged aid best practices and meet the explicit objectives of the administration.

The OGFS will thus bring into alignment the budgets, programming, and ultimate goals of all involved USG agencies, as well as international partners. The preponderance of interests and policy objectives represented in food security assistance policy has come to impede the effectiveness of these programs; as such, the OGFS will be expected to mediate interagency disputes and align objectives under the guiding authority of the L'Aquila Accord and GHFSI. In some instances, this duty may entail dramatic policy changes that reflect the administration's commitment to investments in agricultural development and efforts to increased partner country ownership of assistance. Many of these changes are outlined in this memo.

In order to address all interests, aspects, and stakeholders involved in the issues policy coordination of food aid and food security, the OGFS will be broken down into eight subunits, or bureaus, managing the creation of country-driven development strategies; local and regional procurement initiatives and relations with Congress; relations with the private sector; agricultural research; sustainable development; evaluation; outreach with USDA, USAID, and the State

¹⁵⁷ "Global Food Security Act of 2009." Sec. 102.

Department; and public relations.

A. The Bureau of Food Security Strategy

The team recommends the appointment of a Food Security Strategist to oversee the Bureau of Food Security Strategy within the OGFS who will build upon the administration's many commitments to increased partner country ownership of assistance. The Paris Declaration, Accra Agenda, L'Aquila Accord, GHFSI Consultation Document, and various USAID publications identify country ownership as a pillar upon which aid policies should be based, yet no office or individual has been charged with incorporating this principle into food security assistance policy.

The billions of dollars poured into top-down, often contextually inappropriate solutions over the last five decades represent a poor investment decision by U.S. policymakers. Indeed, ineffective food security assistance is a problem for the world's hungry as well as the American public. In contrast, promoting country-led planning, agricultural self-sufficiency, and decreased reliance on food aid will mean more efficiently invested U.S. taxpayer dollars and increased food security for the world's hungry. As such, the Strategist and Bureau of Food Security Strategy will serve an important role in the OGFS.

In all non-crisis states receiving food aid through USAID's Multi-Year Assistance Programs, the Strategist will oversee the development and implementation of unique, country-specific food security strategies that evaluate local needs, determine priorities, and set aid-receiving countries on a path toward self-sufficiency. Countries' readiness for this process will be determined through USAID's Fragile States Strategy criteria to categorize fragile, vulnerable, and crisis states.¹⁵⁸

Thus, states facing immediate humanitarian crises will continue to receive short-term food aid, while more stable states can begin transitioning toward investments in long-term food security strategies. Those countries with the capacity to consider such plans will work jointly with USG experts to develop food security strategies to guide investments over the next 10 or 20 years. The Strategist will retain the authority to make exceptions to this rule.

Jointly developing long-term food security strategies ensures that future aid is applied to appropriate sectors, where it is deemed most useful and efficient, and will be welcomed by recipients. While aid-receiving countries will continue to have the support of U.S. food aid, they will also be empowered to choose the direction of future food security-related investments. Assistance is then "owned" by recipients rather than donors alone, boosting long-term effectiveness and generating goodwill between donor and recipient nations. Development experts from USAID and agricultural specialists from USDA will consult with a wide spectrum of representatives from the partner country, making the process as inclusive of ethnic minorities, women, rural residents, and marginalized groups as possible.

158 "Fragile States Strategy." U.S. Agency for International Development. 2005.

Similar initiatives have been undertaken by the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC), which mandates the creation of country-specific development plans before any funds are invested. The MCC compact development process has proved lengthy and taxing, and OGFS strategic food security plans may also initially appear more problematic than useful. However, these strategies are central to long-term food security and increased aid effectiveness.

B. The Bureau of Local and Regional Procurement

In order to further improve food aid and decrease food insecurity, we propose the formation of a Bureau of Local and Regional Procurement to address issues of procurement and to serve as Congressional Liaison between the OGFS and Congressional appropriations committees in charge of P.L. 480. We believe that local and regional procurement programs (LRPs) must be expanded in order to maximize the efficiency of the P.L. 480 program and minimize the market disruption and disincentives for agricultural development linked to food aid monetization. In May 2009, the GAO published its finding on the progress of current procurement programs. In the case of Sub-Saharan Africa and Asia, LRPs are more cost efficient whereas in Latin America, food aid coming from the U.S. equaled any type of LRP program. Based on these findings and future such research, we believe that programs in Africa and Asia should be expanded because it is significantly more cost-efficient. As for Latin America, we suggest continuing current programs of food aid purchased and shipped from the U.S. so as to keep our agricultural economy afloat.

Within Congress, foreign relations committees and agricultural committees have competing interests. The agricultural committees represent the interests of domestic farmers, and may be reluctant to accept and support LRP programs. The B/LRP must work with each interested party to find a policy that meets the interests of both committees and promotes sustainable development in aid-receiving countries. Our suggested Liaison would be responsible for reporting on all aspects of LRPs, including to the Bureau of Evaluation. This is necessary to show to Congress as justification for a continual increase in appropriations for such programs.

In order to minimize the disruption of local markets through monetized food aid, we propose funding better market surveys and educational programs to locals in order to eliminate steep market fluctuations. In the 2008 Farm Bill, appropriations for LRPs decreased; however, the opposite needs to happen. The Farm Bill restricts food aid funding for the purchase of U.S.-grown products only. We advocate for a looser wording in the Farm Bill to include the purchasing of U.S. seeds and other products necessary for agriculture. By allowing funding for aid to include the purchasing of U.S. seeds, this could increase options for the B/LRP to distribute seeds to local farmers, giving them a chance towards becoming more food secure.

An expansion of procurement programs would also reduce the high costs of food shipment. Since expansion in these programs would decrease the demand for products from U.S. farmers, we suggest creating a program for U.S. farmers to assist in on-the-grounds training for locals. Such a program would prevent dramatic market fluctuations.

C. The Bureau of Private Sector Relations

The Bureau of Private Sector Relations will oversee policy coordination relating to genetically modified (GM) technology and small private sector enterprises, including microcredit. The current use of biotechnology in food aid programming is controversial, and discussion surrounding the actual effectiveness of such crops in agricultural development is heated. In Section 202 of the proposed Global Food Security Act, legislation would call for an inclusion of GM technology research and potential crop implementation in the Foreign Assistance Act (see footnote). Precedent for the provision of GM crops in food security strategies already exists in both USAID and USDA food assistance programs.¹⁵⁹ While GM crops have not been shown to increase crop yields, they have enabled farmers to harvest more of their crop because they contain their own pest or insect repellent. Thus, in a time of increasing concern over global climate change, GM crops are an important area of research and possible program implementation that must be included in any food security strategy.

However, there are two main concerns over the inclusion of GM technologies in food aid: the social acceptance of such crops in a partner country and the inability of farmers to continue to be able to afford GM crops because of the additional costs of crop-specific fertilizer and the use of terminator technologies. In order to address concerns over GM crops, the B/PSR will undertake the following actions:

- 1). mandate that any research conducted with USG funding be public. One of the main problems inhibiting any work done with GM crops is the lack of access to GM research, which is mainly conducted by private companies. Ensuring that companies and researchers in developing countries have access to biotechnology research carried out by private companies will allow them to benefit from and further develop crops in their own country that would not normally have been able to afford.
- 2). ensure that farmers in developing countries do not have to pay for new seeds every year and that the cost of necessary fertilizers is subsidized if they are using terminator technologies. Terminator technologies require additional costs that affect farmers' decisions to purchase seeds that could increase harvest.
- 3). back the establishment of free licensing for GM crops so that farmers in developing countries can purchase them at much lower prices.
- 4). encourage the signing and ratification of the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety. This agreement allows countries to limit the trade of living modified organisms—

which includes GMOs—across their borders based on their ideas of safety. It also requires that GM crops be labeled before shipping. Ratifying the protocol would be a sign of the United States’ commitment to the safety of the genetically modified crops we produce and send abroad.¹⁶⁰

Besides overseeing biotechnological research, the B/PSR will also work with small private enterprises in developing countries through microcredit loans. The Bureau will ensure that research enterprises in these countries have the institutional capacity to conduct their own studies concerning biotechnology and GM crops. They will also work with small-scale farmers to provide them with loans to purchase crops, fertilizers, and other tools in order to increase their functional capacity.

D. The Bureau of Agricultural Research

The Bureau of Agricultural Research will encourage public-private partnerships and university-level research in both the United States and in partnership with developing country institutions. Currently, Section 301 of the Global Food Security Act calls for an amendment to the Foreign Assistance Act that creates further research opportunities in the areas of nutrition, agricultural development, trade, and technology and establishes the Board for Higher Education Collaboration for Technology, Agriculture, Research, and Extension.¹⁶¹ The B/AR will be the main office that coordinates the necessary policy and that will oversee the creation of the Board.

This Bureau will also work closely with the B/PSR to support agricultural research of GM technologies that is currently being done by USDA, USAID, and other government agencies

E. The Bureau of Sustainable Development

The OGFS cannot look at the food security crisis as simply a technical problem with a technical solution. It is important to realize that the underlying issues of food insecurity are related to the current food system. As such, there must be a revision in the way that agricultural development programs are implemented. The Bureau of Sustainable Development will address issues of sustainability in conjunction with the Bureau of Food Security Strategy. While the Strategist will focus on a development program's institutional capacity, the B/SD will ensure that the program promotes sustainable, environmentally-friendly, local agricultural practices that acknowledge and build upon agriculture's socio and economic impacts on the region.

In order to carry out sustainable agricultural development, the Bureau will focus on the use of agroecology in development programming (please see the provided definition in the glossary page). President Obama's declarations on food security (see the L'Aquila Accords) and the Global Hunger and Food Security Initiative both promote sustainable programs that encourage long-term development. The B/SD will establish a set of protocols that all food security programs must follow in terms of standards concerning

160 “About the Protocol.” The Convention on Biodiversity. <<http://www.cbd.int/biosafety/about.shtml>>

161 “Global Food Security Act of 2009.” Sec. 301.

environmental and economic impact. Following principles established by the University of California Berkeley, the B/SD will also support the B/AR in terms of research concerning alternative agricultural methods that move away from modern technology and embrace traditional farming techniques that are appropriate for the climate, the culture, and the economy of the developing country.

F. The Bureau of Policy Evaluation

A Bureau of Policy Evaluation will be created within the OGFS to undertake cross-cutting contextual and experimental evaluations of food security assistance policy. This team will ensure that programs are properly managed and evaluated for effectiveness and that future policies reflect lessons learned from previous programs. The B/PE will also work closely with the B/SD in ensuring that policy coordinated by the OGFS is sustainable and environmentally friendly.

G. The Bureau of Outreach

In order to improve policy coordination between the various USG agencies involved in food security assistance programming, a Bureau of Outreach will be established within the OGFS. This bureau will work to mediate food security assistance policy-related disputes and reconcile the diverse interests and objectives of USAID, USDA, and the State Department.

H. The Bureau of Food Security Relations

Finally, the position of a Bureau of Food Security Relations will be established in the OGFS to manage public relations duties pertaining to food security assistance. As the lobbying efforts of powerful U.S. farming, agribusiness, and shipping industries have negatively impacted the effectiveness and sustainability of food security assistance policy, it is imperative that the OGFS undertake campaigns to foster public awareness of food security issues. These initiatives will raise awareness of the inefficiencies of existing food aid policies and the possible downsides of GM crop technologies, increase popular support for alternative approaches, encourage greater transparency in policymaking, and thus promote greater efficiency and sustainability in food security assistance policy.

II. The Global Food Security Act

The authors suggest that, in alignment with the above listed reforms, the President support the provisions of Senator Lugar's Global Food Security Act of 2009 pertaining to the appointment of a Special Coordinator for Food Security and the expansion of university agricultural research programs and partnerships. However, the substantial research mandate for GM crops warrants further consideration. The authors specifically ask that the administration call for an amendment to the Act that changes the language of the Foreign Assistance Act from “shall” to “may” in Sec.103A.18 in order to prevent research of GM crops a federal mandate.¹⁶²

¹⁶² Shattuck, Annie and Eric Holt-Gimenez. “Policy Brief No. 18: Why the Lugar-Casey Global Food Security Act will Fail to Curb Hunger.” Institute for Food and Development Policy.

IV. Assumptions and Rationale for Success

The authors make their recommendations under the following assumptions:

Agricultural sector development has been found to combat poverty and chronic under-development, both of which are factors in global food insecurity. The administration's Global Hunger and Food Security Initiative Consultation Document (GHFSI) stresses the need for greater investments in agricultural production systems, rural infrastructure, and market development to build a base for greater self-sufficiency in food production.

Over time, U.S. food aid policies have become dominated by the domestic interests (Congress, the Executive Branch, as well as farming, food processing, and shipping industries) that directly benefit from them. While supporting U.S. interests has always been a justification for foreign assistance, today's burgeoning food crisis necessitates the implementation of policies that better represent the interests of aid recipients.

The monetized disposal of U.S. surplus through PL 480 programs disrupts local agricultural markets, discourages small-scale farming, and makes distribution more costly and slow.¹⁶³ The Government Accountability Office has published a number of reports criticizing food aid procurement and monetization practices for their inefficiency and significant negative impacts on local development.¹⁶⁴

Traditional, top-down food aid policies exclude partner country voices, catering to the interests of donor nations without due consideration of local needs. USAID policies and statements by administration officials, including the GHFSI Consultation Document, recognize increased partner country ownership over assistance as an aid best practice.

Given the opportunity to develop country-led plans, aid-receiving countries will choose to emphasize agricultural sector development and improved food security. All but one existing Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) compact (strategic development plants created jointly with aid-receiving countries) centrally feature projects that increase capacity for agricultural production, suggesting local officials would prioritize food self-sufficiency if given the opportunity.¹⁶⁵

Agroecology and similar bottom-up approaches towards agricultural development are just as, if not more, effective and cheaper than current GM technology methods. Patented agricultural technologies from the U.S. put an unreasonable financial burden on small-scale farmers and encourage dependency, but are supported because they benefit U.S. agribusiness. Many traditional, community-based solutions achieve equal improvements in agricultural efficiency

163 Simmons (2009).

164 GAO (2007).

165 "MCC Investments."

and yields, but have long been neglected.

Precedent for patent pool initiatives and exemptions exist in other health fields. Following negotiations with the U.S. pharmaceutical industry, the prices of HIV/AIDS treatments were lowered on the basis of a tiered development ranking system.¹⁶⁶ Negotiations with U.S. agribusiness could yield similarly beneficial outcomes for GM technologies.

The administration will be able to gather the support of Congress, involved aid agencies, and domestic industries with an interest in food security assistance to undertake these reforms

V. Potential Barriers to Implementation of Reforms

The team anticipates the possibility of the following potential pitfalls:

Resistance from U.S. government agencies

There is already concern in the State Department over a possible change in their control over USAID. The creation of a development office outside of its jurisdiction for an issue that is one of the main development concerns of the administration could prove to upset State officials. Furthermore, existing food security assistance is well entrenched in numerous government agencies, and USAID has already lost much of its policy and budgeting power to the creation of State/F. It is possible that both these agencies could be resistant to a further decrease in control of their policy coordination and budgeting control.

An increased emphasis on long-term agricultural development may also find some opposition from both Congress and the State Department, which appreciate the measurable, well-documented, short-term results of crisis-oriented food aid. The outcomes of food as humanitarian assistance are much easier to use to justify funding and expenditures, and it may not be as easy to rationalize spending when results are not evident for years or decades.

Resistance from U.S. food producers and the shipping industry

The expansion of LRP initiatives and decreased monetization—both of which will decrease monetary benefits to U.S. farmers and shippers—may create disturbances within the U.S. agricultural and shipping industries. Both have a substantial lobbying presence on Capitol Hill and have the potential to greatly influence Congressional foreign relations and agriculture committees who make appropriations decisions. Thus, it is necessary for the USG to work with these industries and win their support and cooperation.

Resistance from biotech industries

Similar to the U.S. food industry, U.S. seed companies and biotech firms may challenge the free-licensing and public mandating of biotechnology research because of the potential profit loss. Seed companies like Monsanto and NGOs/PVOs like the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation who support biotechnology and the use of genetically modified crops may be strong. However, with the assistance of the U.S. government, the authors believe that patent negotiations and subsidizations could result in a very positive public relations opportunity that would work as an

166 “AIDS, drug prices and generic drugs.” AVERT. 12 Nov. 2009.

economic incentive for participation in such activities.

Lack of capacity

It is also possible that the country-driven, long-term development approach put forward by this paper may face challenges of capacity in both the U.S. and partner countries. The strategy outlined in this paper requires an overhaul of the current food assistance structure and the cooperation of several government agencies, business partners, NGOs, Congress, and the White House. It may be difficult to bring every player, each with their own interests and investments, together under one office. Furthermore, severely underdeveloped or corrupt countries may lack the local capacity to develop and effectively implement country-led food security strategies.

Despite these challenges, however, the authors believe that the reforms proposed in this paper are not only necessary, but also the best way to achieve a sustainable, effective food security policy.

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