



The Global Food Security Act of 2016 (S. 1252)

Overview

According to the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), there are currently more than 795 million people, or 1 in 9, around the world suffering from chronic hunger, including 159 million children who are chronically malnourished. The United States has long been a leader in supporting development initiatives that help people move themselves out of poverty. Development work also helps people build more sustainable, prosperous, and resilient communities. Legislation being considered in Congress will give the U.S. government the tools and resources it needs to better combat chronic hunger and malnutrition as well as to expand and better coordinate U.S. investments in improving global food security.

Background

Feed the Future was created in 2009 by the Obama administration, but components of the initiative began at the end of the George W. Bush administration as the U.S. response to the rapid rise in global food prices that occurred in 2007. In July 2009, the U.S. made a \$3.5 billion pledge at the G-8 Summit in L'Aquila, Italy to undertake a new approach toward global food and nutrition security. That pledge in turn saw the inauguration of Feed the Future in 2010. This \$1 billion-a-year global food security initiative helped to reverse a nearly three-decade-long decline in agriculture investment.

While Feed the Future has been funded by Congress in annual appropriations legislation, without official statutory authorization, the future of this program remains in the balance. During the last Congress, bipartisan legislation was introduced and passed in the House but stalled in the Senate. In the 114th Congress, legislation has been reintroduced in both the House and Senate. If passed, this legislation will authorize a comprehensive approach to global food security and nutrition, making Feed the Future permanent and ensuring it continues beyond the current administration.

Feed the Future is Successful

Feed the Future focuses on smallholder farmers, particularly women. The initiative emphasizes country leadership and supports 19 focus countries around the world in developing their own agriculture sectors to generate opportunities for economic growth and trade. Feed the Future also partners across sectors, working together with governments, busi-



FAO/Giulio Napolitano

nesses, researchers, and civil society organizations in order to reduce poverty, hunger, and malnutrition.

Since its inception, Feed the Future has achieved impressive results, helping nearly seven million smallholder farmers increase crop production and providing nutritious foods to more than 12 million children in 2014 alone. Feed the Future and complementary efforts have attracted billions of dollars in agricultural investments, introduced affordable new technologies aimed at increasing agricultural production and mitigating the risks of climate change, and provided nutrient-packed foods to millions of mothers and children around the world.

Overview of Bill

On March 24, 2015, H.R. 1567 was introduced by Reps. Christopher Smith (R-N.J.-04) and Betty McCollum (D-Minn.-04) in the U.S. House of Representatives, and S. 1252 was introduced by Sens. Robert Casey (D-Pa.) and Johnny Isakson (R-Ga.) on May 7, 2015. Both the House and Senate have passed their versions of the bill with overwhelming bipartisan support but with minor differences. As only one bill can go to the president and the Senate's calendar is full, the House is now considering the Senate version, S. 1252.

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Analysis of Bills

Codifying and authorizing Feed the Future would make it a permanent program. Doing so would allow further gains in improving the livelihoods of smallholder farmers, strengthening maternal and child nutrition, and building capacity for long-term agricultural growth. The Global Food Security Act of 2016 (S. 1252) calls for the coordination of a U.S. global food security strategy similar to the one currently guiding the Feed the Future initiative. The strategy is designed to help hungry and malnourished nations around the world develop smart, long-term, country-specific agriculture policies and to ensure these nations independently meet the nutrition needs of their people.

The legislation stresses the importance of nutrition interventions, especially during the critical 1,000-day window from a woman's pregnancy until her child's second birthday. In making improving nutrition a core component of the U.S. global food security strategy, the bill also recognizes and encourages coordination with the variety of activities necessary for this goal; these

include water and sanitation, maternal and child health, agriculture research and education, and more. Such interventions help reduce stunting, life-long poor health, impaired cognitive and physical development, and diminished productivity.

Similarly, the legislation focuses strongly on women's empowerment, a significant component, considering that women are often heads of households and smallholder farmers, making them especially vulnerable to food insecurity. The bill particularly emphasizes women's economic empowerment, including access to financing and market linkages, as well as land rights and women's leadership in agricultural activities. By further engaging women, Feed the Future aims to increase women's farm yields and total agricultural output and close the significant 20 to 30 percent yield gap that currently exists between male and female farmers. This could result in 100 million to 150 million hungry people getting the food they need.

Specifically, the Global Food Security Act of 2016 would:

- require the administration to develop a whole-of-government strategy to

address global food insecurity and malnutrition.

- emphasize the importance of leveraging resources and expertise from U.S. academic institutions, non-governmental organizations, faith-based groups, private voluntary organizations, and the private sector.
- improve upon existing monitoring and evaluation practices to ensure transparency and the effective use of U.S. taxpayer dollars.
- require the administration to report to Congress and to the public annually about the strategy, its results, and the use of foreign-assistance funds.

The act also authorizes international disaster assistance programs. These include the Emergency Food Security Program that supports the use of response tools such as cash transfers, food vouchers, and the purchase of agricultural products locally to meet the needs of communities in emergencies when food aid shipped from the U.S. will not arrive in time or other forms of assistance are more appropriate due to market conditions. International Disaster Assistance was last authorized in 1987.

HELP WOMEN FARMERS

Nearly half of all farmers are women.
If they had the same access as men...



...then women could grow

20-30% more food

AND FEED 100-150 MILLION PEOPLE



Infographic by Doug Puller/Bread for the World

We can move toward ending hunger by helping women farmers. Congress should pass the Global Food Security Act, which would make Feed the Future permanent and help women farmers more.

