

Fact Sheet

Farm Bill International

Global Food Assistance in the 2023 Farm Bill

The United States is a leading contributor to global efforts to save lives and relieve suffering among people who confront hunger and malnutrition. U.S. foreign assistance helps meet immediate needs and also supports countries' efforts to cope with the causes of hunger. The main causes of current global hunger crises are conflict, climate change, and shocks such as the COVID-19 pandemic and Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

Since 1954, U.S. assistance has reached more than 4 billion people in 150 countries in Asia, Africa, and Europe. 1 The Marshall Plan, which helped devastated European countries recover from World War II, was a precursor to these efforts. The plan included food assistance that saved lives and strengthened people's health, enabling them to rebuild their countries and economies more quickly and effectively.



Foreign Assistance in the Farm Bill

The farm bill spells out the main ways the United States provides emergency humanitarian support. The farm bill is an enormous piece of legislation, reauthorized only every five years. It governs both U.S. and global agricultural and food policies and programs.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) administer U.S. global food aid. The aid comes in three forms: in-kind, meaning food shipped from the United States; vouchers to purchase food at local markets; and food purchased from local farmers and distributed to families.

Historically, U.S. food assistance was exclusively in-kind. But shipping food from the United States delays the arrival of much-needed supplies, sometimes for months. It also adds significantly to the costs. Meanwhile, people suffering from severe malnutrition urgently need all available resources.



Bread for the World members and other advocates worked faithfully over several five-year farm bill cycles to persuade Congress to permit a larger share of food aid to be purchased locally or regionally. These efforts paid off: in 2020, 59 percent of U.S.-provided emergency food was purchased locally or regionally—a significant increase over 2010, just 10 years earlier, when only 11 percent was local or regional purchase.

Bread also supports the U.S. Global Food Security Research Strategy, which seeks to strengthen medium- to long-term sustainable food systems through work in essential areas such as climate-smart agriculture, affordable nutritious foods, and improved, more resilient crops.

Bread for the World advocates for robust funding for the following global food assistance programs that are included in the farm bill:

1. Under Food for Peace Title II, the U.S. government donates food produced in the United States to qualified international organizations that then distribute it directly to people who need humanitarian assistance. Food for Peace funds may also be used for purchases from local and regional markets as well as for programs that enable people to resume growing their own food.
2. The McGovern-Dole International Food for Education and Child Nutrition Program advances food security, nutrition, and education for children, especially girls, by providing food for school meals.
3. The Local and Regional Food Aid Procurement (LRP) Program finances the purchase of foods produced locally or in the region, usually in non-emergency situations. The LRP Program also supports countries that participate in the McGovern-Dole school meal program.
4. The John Ogonowski and Doug Bereuter Farmer-to-Farmer Program (Food for Peace Title V) finances short-term U.S. volunteer placements in developing countries to provide technical assistance to farmers.
5. The Research, Extension, and Related Matters Title VII supports agricultural research and extension programs that enable farmers to produce more food. Innovations in climate-smart crops and fertilizers, as well as better crop health, are essential to supporting communities in becoming more resilient.

The reauthorization of the farm bill, including its global provisions, is a top priority for Bread this year. Programs such as Food for Peace provide lifesaving humanitarian assistance to millions of people facing dangerous levels of hunger and malnutrition.

¹ USAID Frequently Asked Questions. <https://www.usaid.gov/food-assistance/faq>

² Congressional Research Service: U.S. International Food Assistance: An Overview (Updated February 23, 2021) <https://sgp.fas.org/crs/row/R45422.pdf>

