

# 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. 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 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 farm bill spells out the main ways the United States provides emergency nutrition assistance as well as long-term development support to help communities become more resilient to chronic challenges and sudden shocks.

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.

The farm bill also supports research on critical agricultural, food security, and nutrition issues. The 2023 farm bill offers an opportunity to increase funding for public research and development to seek solutions that will reduce hunger and malnutrition in lower-income communities, especially hunger caused by climate change.

### Bread for the World advocates for these international policy asks in the farm bill:

- 1. Reauthorize:** Bread is asking Congress to reauthorize several global nutrition assistance programs that reduce both acute and chronic hunger and malnutrition, including Food for Peace Title II (“Food for Peace”); the McGovern-Dole International Food for Education and Child Nutrition Program (“McGovern-Dole Food for Education”); the Bill Emerson Humanitarian Trust; and the Doug Bereuter Farmer-to-Farmer Program.
- 2. Reform:** Bread is asking Congress to eliminate commodity requirements for Food for Peace non-emergency programs and to keep the existing commodity requirements for emergency programs. In McGovern-Dole Food for Education, Bread advocates increasing the percentage of spending allowed for local and regional procurement (LRP) from 10 percent to a range of 10 percent to 20 percent. The McGovern-Dole program should improve access for local farmers as part of LRP.
- 3. Research:** Bread advocates elevating and investing in research and development for food security as a priority, particularly projects designed to improve nutrition and/or adaptation to climate change. Emergency food assistance alone will not lead to progress against global hunger.
- 4. Replenish:** The Bill Emerson Humanitarian Trust funds the purchase of U.S. commodities to alleviate severe hunger and malnutrition in times of extraordinary need. The Trust was drawn down in 2022 for the first time since 2014. Bread is asking Congress to require that a replenishment mechanism for the Trust be put in place and to lower the barriers to accessing funding from the Trust.

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

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

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