

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20510

June 19, 2020

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
United States Senate
317 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker of the House
United States House of Representatives
1236 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Charles E. Schumer
Minority Leader
United States Senate
322 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader
United States House of Representatives
2468 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Leader McConnell, Speaker Pelosi, Leader Schumer and Leader McCarthy:

We write in support of robust funding and sufficient flexibilities to ensure the delivery of much-needed assistance to avert anticipated food crises precipitated by the COVID-19 pandemic. We ask that a subsequent COVID-19 stimulus package include robust funding for the Food for Peace Title II program and the International Disaster Assistance (IDA) account for lifesaving aid, including the delivery of emergency food aid, market stabilization and development interventions to ensure smallholder farmers around the world can weather market disruptions.

The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted every sector of the economy and is now crippling global food supply chains. While the initial stages of the pandemic have fortunately avoided food supply shortages, eventual market and supply disruptions due to COVID-19 and losses in agricultural productivity in developing countries affected by the virus are going to have major impacts on food security. Even as American farmers are struggling amidst significant supply chain disruptions, they are committed to feeding those most in need, both domestically and globally.

Vulnerable populations living in low-income countries with severe development deficits, limited social safety nets and poor healthcare infrastructure are at particular risk. Prior to COVID-19, over 135 million people across 55 countries were already living in crisis levels of food security.¹ The World Food Program (WFP) estimates that another 130 million people could be pushed into acute hunger by COVID-19 this year, for a total of 265 million men, women and children facing crisis levels of hunger.² A worst-case scenario would result in famine in over 30 countries.

¹ https://www.fsinplatform.org/sites/default/files/resources/files/GRFC_2020_ONLINE_200420.pdf

² <https://www.wfp.org/news/covid-19-will-double-number-people-facing-food-crises-unless-swift-actions-taken>

Given these stark predictions, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) predicts that COVID-19 will increase global humanitarian assistance needs by 25 percent. We understand that USAID has worked quickly to adjust its programming related to long-term development efforts like Feed the Future and emergency humanitarian support via Food for Peace and the Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA). While the CARES Act included \$608 million in humanitarian aid³, more must be done. Nearly \$1.6 billion of the United Nations' \$6.7 billion global humanitarian appeal for COVID response efforts is specifically for food security, nutrition and agriculture – an appeal we can help to resource through our food assistance and agricultural development programs.

In an effort to ensure the United States is contributing to the global efforts to combat hunger resulting from the COVID-19, as well as sufficiently utilizing existing programming for food security, we respectfully request the following in the next COVID-19 response legislation:

- **Food for Peace:** At least \$850 million for Food for Peace Title II, including to purchase commodities and pre-position food aid around the world.
- **Emergency food aid:** Robust funding for IDA for the delivery of emergency food aid to displaced and vulnerable populations. Furthermore, back contributions to the UN humanitarian appeal to meet the \$1.6 billion need for food security, nutrition and agriculture.
- **Bill Emerson Humanitarian Trust:** Consider creating flexibility for USDA and USAID to access the Bill Emerson Humanitarian Trust, a reserve of last resort, for both purchase of in-kind commodities and logistics and administrative costs.
- **Resilience and development:** Support Feed the Future as a whole-of-government strategy to leverage resources across federal agencies to mitigate pandemic-related shocks, produce data and analysis “to help countries implement forward-looking policies; help small and medium-sized food and agriculture businesses shift business models and withstand the most severe impacts; and rapidly disseminate information in emerging economies about how consumers can safely participate in food and agriculture activities and markets amid COVID-19.”⁴
 - Continue to support USAID’s efforts to strengthen global agricultural research and development, in partnership with CGIAR, to protect global food systems and provide early warning signs for food price volatility, restrictive trade policies, and other actions that could adversely affect smallholder farmers.
- **Diplomatic engagement:** Include report language requiring the State Department, the U.S. Department of Agriculture and other U.S. government entities to engage diplomatically to prevent food export quotas.

Sincerely,

³ <https://www.appropriations.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/032520%20Title-By-Title%20Summary%20FINAL.pdf>

⁴ <https://www.state.gov/update-the-united-states-is-continuing-to-lead-the-response-to-covid-19/>

Robert P. Casey Jr
United States Senator

Jimmy Panetta
Member of Congress

Jerry Moran
United States Senator

Glenn “GT” Thompson
Member of Congress

Sherrod Brown
United States Senator

James P. McGovern
Member of Congress

Richard J. Durbin
United States Senator

Roger Marshall, M.D.
Member of Congress

Tammy Baldwin
United States Senator

Jim Costa
Member of Congress

Chellie Pingree
Member of Congress

CC: Chairman Richard Shelby
Chairwoman Nita M. Lowey
Ranking Member Patrick Leahy
Ranking Member Kay Granger