

Centering Global Food Security for Global Prosperity

Catherine Bertini and Ertharin Cousin
Cochairs

December 2020

Released February 2021



Executive summary

- The new Biden administration will face global crises on multiple fronts. COVID-19, coupled with conflict and escalating climate disasters, is leading to one of the most devastating humanitarian and hunger crises in the last century.
- In the past decade, the food security and nutrition security programs of previous US administrations have demonstrated their value and impact for alleviating hunger and malnutrition and for reducing the threat of conflict and governmental instability.
- As a result of targeted and thoughtful assistance, 23.4 million more people today live above the poverty line and 3.4 million more children are free from stunting. More than 5 million families now live free from hunger, and billions of dollars in agricultural sales have been generated.
- The Biden administration has the opportunity to build on a strong foundation of work. To strengthen these programs in the next decade, the administration should consider these key actions:
 - Creating more resilient and healthful food systems that are capable of absorbing shocks and stressors. Systems thinking—especially the integration of food, nutrition, health, climate, and agriculture—can drive sustainable outcomes.

- Building inclusive partnerships from the beginning to create sustainable and resilient communities.
- Investing in agricultural economies beyond US borders to create critical infrastructure that fosters agricultural trade from our own heartland.

Policy recommendations

- 1. The United States should increase funding for global food and nutrition programs across the government from approximately \$3 billion to \$6 billion annually.** This increased funding should be allocated to support an expanded Global Food Security Strategy and increased agricultural and related nutritional research and development.
- 2. A food security, nutrition security, and humanitarian crisis representative such as the administrator of the US Agency for International Development (USAID) should be appointed to the National Security Council alongside the new Special Envoy for Climate.** This appointee would help address the critical decision-making dynamics between hunger, particularly during acute humanitarian crises, and the issues of conflict escalation, US national security, and other key foreign policy objectives.
- 3. The US Department of Agriculture should play a lead role in determining and leveraging US agricultural research capabilities to address global as well as domestic food and nutrition security challenges**

The Chicago Council on Global Affairs is an independent, nonpartisan organization.

Photo credit: REUTERS/Micky Wiswedel

Copyright ©2021 by Chicago Council on Global Affairs

All rights reserved.

Printed in the United States of America.

This article may not be reproduced in whole or in part, in any form (beyond that copying permitted by sections 107 and 108 of the US Copyright Law and excerpts by reviewers for the public press), without written permission from the publisher. For further information about the Chicago Council or this article, please write to Chicago Council on Global Affairs, 180 North Stetson Avenue, Suite 1400, Chicago, IL 60601 or visit www.thechicagocouncil.org.

arising from climate change and COVID-19. One billion dollars of the proposed increased funding should go toward supporting agriculture research and development.

4. To better achieve foreign policy goals, and specifically food and nutrition security goals, the **United States must rebuild trust on the global stage and show reinvigorated interest in partnership with allies.** Rebuilding the State Department with capabilities to support global food and nutrition security programs through diplomatic means and policy promotion is critical to ensuring both immediate and longer-term success.
5. Creation of the new US Development Finance Corporation (DFC) is a critical step toward improving US financing capabilities. The DFC recently established an agriculture and food/nutrition security portfolio. **The administration should take this opportunity to ensure the DFC has increased internal capacity and expertise for agricultural financing, building on the creation of this new portfolio. It also should ensure that the DFC improves communication and collaboration with US development agencies to target financing in areas of mutual investment.**

To better achieve foreign policy goals, and specifically food and nutrition security goals, the United States must rebuild trust on the global stage and show reinvigorated interest in partnership with allies.

6. **USAID should expand the number of countries participating in the United States' flagship food and nutrition security program, Feed the Future.** Expansion of this successful investment of taxpayer dollars would demonstrate the Biden administration's strengthened commitment to achieving global food security. **In addition, USAID leadership should build on the work already done and continue to more fully integrate sustainability, nutrition, gender, and data transparency across all operational and issue areas.**



The current crisis

The new Biden administration will start 2021 with unprecedented challenges at home and abroad. In addition to the significant needs here in the United States, the administration enters the fray with a weakened US presence abroad, a huge deficit of trust from former allies, and diminished global standing. The entire world faces crises on multiple fronts; COVID-19, coupled with conflict and escalating climate disasters, has meant that countries are forced to manage major crises layered on top of crises. This has created an urgent need for clear leadership and decisive action from the public and private sectors. The United States must reengage on the global stage or face the consequences of increasing disarray and disaster both domestically and internationally.

Global food and nutrition security was elevated as a major priority of the US government 10 years ago, and progress has been mixed in addressing global hunger and malnutrition. During the first five years of the United States' flagship food and nutrition security program, Feed the Future, the world saw substantial reductions in the number of hungry and malnourished people. However, global hunger and malnutrition increased in the following five years from 2015 to 2020.¹ In fact, the number of hungry people in the world just prior to the COVID-19 pandemic returned to nearly 2009 levels.² Moreover, the combined impact of climate change, conflict, and COVID-19—along with the pressure of sustained poverty—is setting the stage for one of the largest disasters in recorded history. Experts estimate that the pandemic could double the number of people

Despite the best efforts of Feed the Future and similar initiatives, factors that contribute to the rise of global hunger and malnutrition have been intensifying over time and have hampered efforts to address these challenges.

suffering from severe food and/or nutrition insecurity.³ In addition to the dire need for increased and immediate humanitarian aid, the pandemic has disrupted livelihoods around the world, which itself carries long-term consequences. The magnitude and urgency of this complex crisis cannot be overstated.

Despite the best efforts of Feed the Future and similar initiatives, factors that contribute to the rise of global hunger and malnutrition have been intensifying over time and have hampered efforts to address these challenges. The frequency and magnitude of natural disasters, such as cyclones and drought, have increased as a result of a changing climate.⁴ Temperature and rainfall have become increasingly variable, wreaking havoc on the best-laid plans of farmers all around the world. Additionally, agricultural pests and pathogens continue to remain a threat, as demonstrated by locusts plaguing Eastern Africa and the Middle East and the global spread of African swine fever, which in 2019 claimed one-quarter of the world's swine population.⁵

The hunger crisis is fueled by more than just natural disasters and climate issues. The UN World Food Programme (WFP) noted that almost 60 percent of the world's 690 million severely hungry people live in areas affected by armed violence.⁶ As the main driver of 80 percent of the world's most severe hunger crises and nutrition shortfalls, conflict is currently the single greatest challenge to creating a hunger-free and nutrition-secure world.⁷ Conflict also disrupts agricultural production and economies, both of which are already stressed by climate change. This interaction creates a negative feedback loop. It has displaced a staggering number of people, causing refugee crises in neighboring regions. From 2011 to 2018 the number of people seeking refuge outside their country of origin increased by 70 percent.⁸ In 2019 more than 79.5 million people were displaced, in part due to conflict and ensuing crises.⁹ In the Central Sahel region of Africa alone, climate change and conflict have displaced 1.6 million people and left 5 million people in need of immediate humanitarian assistance.¹⁰

For the first time in 100 years, the world is facing a devastating global pandemic, which has intensified the threat posed by climate and conflict. As the number of infections rose around the world, with a third wave hitting both Europe and the United States in the winter of 2020–21, more lockdowns took place.¹¹ The virus spread like wildfire across countries, impacting the most vulnerable in our communities the hardest. Governments,

health officials, and local leaders failed to contain the spread for various reasons. While high-income countries fell short, swift action from the African Union and country governments mitigated the spread in some low- and middle-income countries (LMICs).¹² However, the initial lockdown has not stopped a second spike of infections as new variants of the virus drive the spread of disease.¹³ In addition, the necessary actions to prevent the spread of the virus have had a huge economic impact. The closing of markets and borders across entire regions has greatly affected the ability to sell, trade, and buy needed agricultural and food supplies.¹⁴ In many LMICs, social protections are either limited or in some places nonexistent, leaving those most vulnerable to deal with these interlocking crises alone. Food and nutrition insecurity is on the rise in both the United States and Europe and is reaching devastating levels in already struggling communities in Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia. WFP estimates that an additional 130 million people will fall into severe food insecurity and malnutrition due to COVID-19.¹⁵

The pandemic has deepened the global hunger and malnutrition crisis, but it has also revealed a path forward: the need for governments, aid organizations, and activists on the ground to focus on building resilient systems. A better understanding of the intersection and integration of agriculture, health, and nutrition has never been more important. Agriculture's principal goal is supporting human well-being. The pandemic disrupted global food supply chains and markets, reemphasizing the fragility of our global food system. Food has spoiled in shockingly large quantities because it could not reach the people who needed it.¹⁶ Labor shortages severely hampered harvests around the world.¹⁷ Farmers were unable to access both inputs to support production and markets to sell their products.¹⁸ The world needs to invest in solutions leading to more resilient food systems that can withstand costly and deadly shocks (like a pandemic, cyclone, or conflict) before such events escalate into crises. A global pandemic and its impact on short- and long-term food insecurity may demand a global response, but it also requires US leadership.





Building from a strong foundation

Feed the Future has achieved remarkable results, and it will continue to be critical for addressing the looming crises ahead. Its 10-year anniversary in September 2020 was a moment to reflect on the reasons for its founding, to evaluate progress, and to prepare for future challenges. Today, 23.4 million more people live above the poverty line because of this program, and 3.4 million more children are free from stunting. More than 5 million families now live free from hunger, similarly growing numbers are free of malnutrition, and billions of dollars in agricultural sales have been generated.¹⁹ This is a direct result of Feed the Future's targeted and thoughtful assistance and its focus on continual improvement.

Feed the Future is not the only program addressing food and nutrition security. The US government's Global Food Security Strategy operates in conjunction with 11 different US agencies, including the US Department of

Commerce, the US Department of Agriculture (USDA), and the US Department of State. These programs collectively aim to address issues at the heart of food and nutrition insecurity, specifically targeting smallholder farmers to drive up production, provide new technologies, and help support market development of the most appropriate foods. Global food and nutrition security programs do not aim to address immediate humanitarian need, but seek to build resilience, increase sustainability, and enhance the livelihoods of farmers around the world. Support of sustainable livelihoods through agricultural development and mitigation of malnutrition is a proven way to prevent farmers from becoming recipients of humanitarian aid. Building resilient farmers can help limit the impact of famine, pests, and disease on communities and can better assist in the healthy development of their families. Initiatives like USDA's Cochran and Borlaug Fellowships and Farmer-to-Farmer Program

help build capacity and transfer knowledge to farmers around the world. These global food and nutrition security efforts also include partners from many countries and multilateral institutions such as the World Bank and the African Development Bank.

Diverse investments and strong US leadership have provided the gains seen over the past decade. Global food and nutrition security efforts have been effective despite the pressures of COVID-19, climate change, and conflict. In fact, the outlook would have been worse if it were not for the sustained efforts of coordinated global food and nutrition security programs. Feed the Future and the wider food security strategy have helped mitigate hunger and nutrition insecurity and provided a solid infrastructure to build on as the United States turns the page to consider the next decade. Over the past 10 years, the programs have grown, changed, and adapted to reflect new thinking and new realities. During that time, the US development model was updated to emphasize resilience, and this is reflected in USAID's new Bureau for Resilience and Food Security (RFS). While gender and nutrition have, importantly, been integrated and incorporated on a much larger scale and sustainability is finally emerging as a key consideration in US programming, more work remains in these three critical areas.

Feed the Future was created following the 2007–08 food price spikes and the ensuing global turmoil. The program was a result of the recognition that food and nutrition security and national security are clearly linked. Today, global food and nutrition security continues to be a matter of national security. As threats to global food and nutrition security intensify, so will threats to US national security. The Office of the Director of National Intelligence has codified climate change and food security as threats to national security in their annual threat assessments.²⁰ Furthermore, the influence of other nations in areas of strategic interest to stated US foreign policy goals is rising. Investing in LMIC development is one way to bolster and reestablish positive partnerships. Feed the Future, alongside other US global food and nutrition security programs, not only feeds people, but builds human capacity and enables stronger markets. This ultimately creates communities more resilient to future crises. Forging true partnerships with target countries strengthens US strategic relationships and accelerates market growth in LMICs. As we move toward

Feed the Future was created following the 2007–08 food price spikes and the ensuing global turmoil. The program was a result of the recognition that food and nutrition security and national security are clearly linked. Today, global food and nutrition security continues to be a matter of national security.

an uncertain future, global food and nutrition security efforts will remain a smart investment.

Conversely, the cost of US inaction is high, and decreasing investment or delaying action could risk undoing a decade of progress. Continued US investment in global food and nutrition security programs is therefore critical. The predicted long-term consequences of COVID-19 have yet to be seen. While the hunger and nutrition crisis is immediate, the irreversible effects of malnutrition, stunting, and wasting on human health will impact a generation of children and young adults in the decades to come. The impacts on cognitive, physical, and economic growth for the foreseeable future will limit prosperity for countless people and countries.

Food and nutrition insecurity, poverty, and unemployment are factors known to lead to instability and civil unrest. Fragile countries, which are broken by a rising wave of hunger, are breeding grounds for threats to US national security. Through Feed the Future and other global food and nutrition security programs, the United States has created a tested and proven infrastructure to help mitigate and respond to future crises. By building on the success of our global food and nutrition security programs and acting on the valuable lessons learned, we can ensure these programs remain relevant and continue making hard-fought progress against the critical challenges we face.

What can be improved?

A reinvestment from the United States and a reinvigorated assertion of US leadership through partnership with those in the global food and nutrition arena will be essential. The past decade of global food and nutrition security programs has yielded major successes and some failures, with important lessons to learn. The Feed the Future development model has adapted and grown intermittently and sporadically, and it will be imperative to fully integrate key areas of understanding to ensure its future success. In moving forward, three major areas of investment should be more fully integrated into global food and nutrition security efforts.

First, many factors contribute to hunger and malnutrition, however poverty and unemployment are viewed as primary drivers.²¹ With this in mind, US programs cannot be created in a vacuum and should account for other community influences and obstacles facing smallholder farmers and families. Consideration of the food system as a whole must be included as part of any successful programming, especially in creating a more resilient and healthy food system that is capable of absorbing shocks and stressors. Delivering sustainable outcomes requires systems thinking that integrates food, nutrition, health, climate, and agriculture.²² When farmers and families are not only taught or provided tools to produce more but also help build a sustainable infrastructure on which to thrive, they are more likely to move out of poverty and become economically successful.²³

A resilient and sustainable food system infrastructure must include community-led and inclusive efforts for both women and men farmers of all socioeconomic standing. It must create and expand market access, which means building demand for local products and a trading infrastructure that can grow alongside the community. It should include expanding investment in agricultural research and development at local universities to allow innovation in the field and also include extension networks that better translate new technologies to remote and underserved farmers.²⁴ Until recently, efforts to address malnutrition have been insufficiently integrated into hunger relief and development programs. By better integrating nutrition across Feed the Future programs and elevating it as a key pillar when measuring program outcomes, it will go beyond rhetoric and allow results to reach families on the ground.²⁵ Finally, programs should incorporate USAID's Journey to Self-

Reliance model, with the goal of fostering communities that no longer need aid.²⁶

Second, while there has always been an understanding that the United States cannot act alone and should not act without the support and inclusion of local partners on the ground, the vision for how to build productive and collaborative partnerships has been evolving. For the past decade, uneven attention has been given to engaging local partners in countries where global food security programs are being implemented.²⁷ Building sustainable and resilient communities requires inclusive partnerships from the beginning, yet true partnerships have been rare. Outcomes, milestones, implementation, and metrics should be led by local institutions and communities. Support for local agripreneurs and businesses

Support for local agripreneurs and businesses should be included at all levels to ensure that programs help build sustainable businesses rather than solely provide short-term relief.

should be included at all levels to ensure that programs help build sustainable businesses rather than solely provide short-term relief. Unemployment, a main driver of poverty and food insecurity, can be mitigated if local talent is cultivated. Youth are the most likely demographic group to participate in civil unrest, especially if they are stuck in a cycle of unemployment, malnutrition, and hunger. As the youth bulge continues to grow, particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa, engaging them in a profitable, health-promoting, and successful agricultural system on and off the farm can be mutually beneficial for the youth population and for the development of a prosperous community.²⁸

Investment and collaboration with local partners help build sustainability by creating buy-in from institutions, foster market demand by identifying needs dictated by the community rather than national or international

actors, and establish long-term infrastructure and behavior patterns that can be passed from generation to generation. In addition to local partners, collaboration with multilateral institutions—such as the World Bank, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), African Development Bank, International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD, funded through the Department of the Treasury), and the CGIAR system (formerly Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research)—is critical for overall reductions in food and nutrition insecurity. Collaboration should also include other initiatives from high-income countries, such as Germany and others of the European Union, the United Kingdom, and Japan. The United States joined the international community’s commitment to the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), but has abdicated a leading role for the past four years under the previous administration. Now is the time to reengage with national and international partners to build progress toward these goals, and specifically SDG2, which addresses hunger and agricultural development.

Finally, new thinking has emerged across the development community that rejects financial growth as the

only metric for success.²⁹ The development community should accelerate the abandonment of the notion that development is linear, one directional, and narrowly defined by financial growth as success. US farmers and consumers have been impacted by disruptions in other parts of the global food system. COVID-19 has demonstrated that the US system is part of a larger global network and cannot be divorced from the world. In addition, our food system is becoming increasingly fragile.³⁰ US investment in agricultural development should be viewed as an investment for improving the stability and healthfulness of the global food system as a whole and as an investment in prosperity for future generations. Investing in agricultural economies beyond US borders should not be viewed as supporting competition, but as an investment in critical infrastructure that in the long term will support trade with our own heartland. Strengthening a US agricultural enterprise that supports human well-being will require innovative, sustainable technologies and practices in our own backyard as well as the expansion of markets in struggling nations.



What should the Biden administration do?

1. The United States should increase its investment in global food and nutrition security efforts in order to prevent devastating, long-term impacts from the COVID-19 pandemic and other drivers of hunger and malnutrition, including climate change and conflict. **Continued investment in food and nutrition security programs across the government is necessary to build upon and expand current efforts and should be increased from approximately \$3 billion to \$6 billion annually.**³¹ On average, annual funding includes investments under the State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs account and the Agricultural Appropriations account. The recommended doubling of funds and efforts reflects the expanded need for addressing the triple crises of climate change, conflict, and COVID-19.
 - a. Of the additional \$3 billion in funding proposed, \$2 billion should support the Global Food Security Strategy (GFSS). Specifically, this funding should support expansion of GFSS programs such as USAID’s Feed the Future. By expanding Feed the Future to include additional “target countries” in potential new regions of focus such as Central America and South Asia, US food and nutrition security programs could drastically increase the number of beneficiaries and reduce food and nutrition insecurity in areas of strategic impor-
 - b. The new administration should demonstrate renewed US resolve to engage and expand on global food and nutrition security efforts at the upcoming UN Food Systems Summit and Nutrition for Growth Summit. The State Department, alongside USAID and USDA, should agree on a high-level representative delegation as well as specific domestic and global commitments reflective of this new resolve and include a specific financial commitment.
 - c. As the administration plans renewed engagement in the UN’s Global Climate Action Agenda, it is critical that food and nutrition security and agriculture are included as priority issues. For example, the next meeting of the Conference of Parties (COP26) is an important opportunity to incorporate agriculture, nutrition, and food security issues in all discussions.



2. A food security, nutrition security, and humanitarian crisis representative such as the USAID administrator should be appointed to the National Security Council alongside the new Special Envoy for Climate.

This appointee would help address critical decision-making dynamics between hunger, particularly during acute humanitarian crises, and the issues of conflict escalation, US national security, and other key foreign policy objectives.

a. This representative, with support from USAID's deputy coordinator for Feed the Future, should lead a new Global Food and Nutrition Security and Sustainability Task Force, on which the new Special Envoy for Climate should be consulted. This task force would be built upon the current Global Food Security Strategy coordination structure and should examine global food and nutrition security efforts underway across the US government to identify and address any gaps. The task force should align the US national security strategy for key regions with the Global Food Security Strategy, multisectoral nutrition strategy, global water strategy, global fragility strategy, and any new whole-of-government climate strategy created by the new Special Envoy for Climate to support overlapping and coordinated goals, countries, and regions. This would allow agencies to move forward in a more synchronized way. The task force should leverage key thought leadership across academia, the private sector, and government, including experts such as USAID's Board for International Food and Agricultural Development (BIFAD) appointees.

b. The White House's Office of Science and Technology Policy should create a coordinated Agricultural Research Council, incorporating input from agencies across the defense, intelligence, agriculture, interior, food, and development communities. This council would provide guidance on funding allocations for key research priorities to protect and enhance US agriculture and, by proxy, the global food system. This council should also periodically liaise with American land-grant colleges and universities, a rich system of agricultural knowledge that could be more fully utilized by the US government and the CGIAR system, an international consortium of research laboratories aimed

USDA should play a lead role in determining and leveraging US agricultural and nutrition research capabilities to address global as well as domestic food and nutrition security challenges arising from climate change and COVID-19.

at advancing agriculture. Innovative science and technology have never been more instrumental in transforming agriculture and solving hunger and malnutrition in our lifetime.

3. USDA performs a critical role in supplying key knowledge and expertise on agricultural research and technologies. The Biden administration should enable USDA leadership to restore staffing for critical research agencies like the Economic Research Service and the National Institute of Food and Agriculture. Building on the Agricultural Research Council suggested above, **USDA should play a lead role in determining and leveraging US agricultural and nutrition research capabilities to address global as well as domestic food and nutrition security challenges arising from climate change and COVID-19.**

a. Specifically, USDA's secretary should direct the USDA chief scientist to coordinate both intramural and extramural research activities related to global and domestic climate change issues. Additional climate-related research and development should incorporate a food systems-based approach for addressing climate-related issues. It should include international research coordination and support for the CGIAR system and Feed the Future Innovation Labs at land-grant universities. Achieving this goal will require leadership with cross-government accountability, for example by including USDA's chief scientist on

Rebuilding the State Department with capabilities to support food and nutrition programs through diplomatic means and policy promotion is critical to program success.

the White House Agricultural Research Council. Additional funding, if appropriated by Congress, should target and address increased productivity, specifically land- and water-use efficiency, abiotic stresses such as heat and drought, and biotic stresses such as pests and diseases that will likely increase under climate change. Increased research and development funding should also support the development of solutions for water and waste management in intensive livestock systems and for improved pasture varieties and management of grazing systems.

- b. USDA should lead in encouraging and promoting the adoption of appropriate new and existing precision agriculture and irrigation technologies by farmers at home and abroad. Through provision of credit, information services, and advanced information and communications technology applications, USDA could improve the adoption and efficient use of these technologies by small-scale producers. The benefits to these producers would be significant, including increased income from higher-value crops, higher yields due to more precise irrigation during critical crop-growth periods, convenience and labor savings, and lower pumping costs.
- c. USDA's Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS) should better coordinate and collaborate with USAID's missions in countries where programming overlaps. Expanding the number of FAS foreign service officers in key regions such as Western Africa is critical to creating resilient programming, especially places where USDA's food aid and development programs overlap with USAID's

Feed the Future initiative. A key goal of resilient food and nutrition security programs is the development of functioning markets and a robust trading system, and FAS foreign service officers can provide unique expertise on agricultural trading markets and address tariff and nontariff barriers. Wherever FAS has a presence, it should increase coordination and knowledge transfer with regional and local country governments, with the goal of building and increasing foundational demand for US agricultural products in new markets as well as helping countries streamline trade across local and regional borders.

- d. The new administration should seize the opportunity to enhance the successful McGovern-Dole International Food for Education program by addressing any new distribution and operations constraints resulting from COVID-19 restrictions. To achieve this goal, USDA should permit appropriate modifications to program metrics and assessments. In order to continue providing life-saving food assistance, many implementing organizations drastically adapted their programming when schools were forced to close to protect children from infection, making necessary changes such as the use of take-home food rations.
4. To better achieve foreign policy goals, and specifically food and nutrition security goals, the **United States must rebuild trust on the global stage and show reinvigorated interest in partnership with allies.** The Biden transition agenda acknowledges the importance of strengthening institutional and agency capacity, specifically at the Department of State. This recognition is critically important for executing US foreign policy priorities, advancing US leadership, and protecting US national security. The State Department has been understaffed for several years, resulting in negative diplomatic consequences critically identified by US foreign policy operatives and our allies. Despite the relative success of investments in humanitarian and development programming, civil unrest and instability continue to proliferate in food-insecure regions of strategic importance to the United States. In many cases, issues of humanitarian access go unaddressed, resulting in increased acute and chronic food insecurity. The United States needs a robust response, and



the State Department plays a key role in supporting USAID's global food and nutrition security efforts. Diplomatic political access and solutions can make a difference in successfully implementing a global food and nutrition security agenda. Rebuilding the State Department with capabilities to support these programs through diplomatic means and policy promotion is critical to ensuring both immediate and longer-term success.

- a. With more local partnerships and country-led development, US agencies need better tools for assessing and anticipating future conflicts and crises on the ground. By leveraging in-house expertise at embassies in countries aligned with USAID's ongoing missions, the State Department can more effectively support assessments that allow food security and nutrition programming to better adapt their anticipation of and their reaction to new and ongoing challenges.
- b. The State Department should ensure every ambassador and embassy staff receive mandatory training from the USAID mission on in-country agricultural development and nutrition programming. This training should include briefings on all food and nutrition security activities undertaken through US programs, multilateral efforts, and donor-funded initiatives, especially those that fall under the Global Food Security Strategy, multisectoral nutrition strategy, global water strategy, and global fragility strategy. There should always be a

direct line of communication between the USAID mission director and the ambassador.

- c. The administration should reengage with key international institutions and strengthen leadership to shape the international agenda. These institutions must include but are not limited to the UN International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), FAO, IFAD, WFP, CGIAR, and global non-governmental organizations.
5. Agricultural financing for small- and medium-sized entrepreneurs in LMICs, especially farmers, has consistently been underfunded in US development efforts. Creation of the new US Development Finance Corporation (DFC) is a critical step toward improving US financing capabilities. The DFC recently established an agriculture and food security portfolio. This investment portfolio will be an important building block for robust agricultural financing and is a good first step. **The administration should take this opportunity to ensure the DFC has increased internal capacity and expertise for agricultural financing. It also should ensure that the DFC improves communication and collaboration with US development agencies to target financing in areas of mutual investment.** The DFC should leverage public-private partnerships and work closely with the World Bank and the African Development Bank to build on their existing work. The portfolio should focus on financing and lending to food and nutrition and/or climate-integrated projects. It should also strengthen the DFC's small business support clause.

The administration has the opportunity to demonstrate strong leadership on food systems development through Feed the Future and other global food and nutrition security programs.

6. The Biden administration should seize the opportunity to make USAID “fit for purpose” by funding and executing the following recommendations and ensuring the agency is fully staffed.

a. **USAID development activities and investments should continue to support and enhance US foreign policy priorities.** As articulated above, this will require the inclusion of the USAID administrator in the National Security Council.

b. The administration has the opportunity to demonstrate strong leadership on food systems development through Feed the Future and other global food and nutrition security programs. The agency has already built on the recognized success of these programs and adapted as new operational challenges have arisen, most recently the COVID-19 pandemic. As mentioned above, to further strengthen this leadership **the new administration should expand the number of countries participating in Feed the Future.** Expansion of this successful investment of taxpayer dollars would demonstrate the Biden administration’s renewed commitment to achieving the SDG2 of zero hunger.

c. **USAID and its Resilience and Food Security Bureau will need to foster more widespread coordination of investments across the nexus of water, energy, and agriculture.** A systems approach for understanding the relationship between water, energy, health, and agriculture should not just apply to on-farm practices, but more broadly to activities across the entire food system such as processing and packaging.

d. **The Board for International Food and Agricultural Development (BIFAD) should be reshaped to more accurately reflect a diversity of experiences.** The president appoints all seven members of BIFAD and should therefore strengthen the group—with input from the USAID administrator—by better integrating representatives and feedback from historically black colleges and universities and land-grant universities (including tribal land-grant colleges and universities) into policy and programming across the agency.

e. **To enhance the agency’s efforts and better fulfill its mission, USAID leadership should build on existing work to more fully integrate sustainability, nutrition, gender, and data transparency across all operational and issue areas.**

- i. USAID should expand its efforts to integrate sustainability into programming in order to better address issues across food systems, especially those expected to have the largest impact in the future. This will require consideration of sustainability into all aspects of implementation.
- ii. Nutrition programming has been overlooked for decades but should be fully integrated into agriculture, food, and resilience programming. The newly created USAID Leadership Council on Nutrition during the most recent restructuring is a step in the right direction, but it should provide clear and actionable guidance on nutrition programming that can enhance food security. This guidance should also support efforts to better partner with the private sector, which can impact a larger number of those suffering from malnutrition. The council should also have clear goals beyond just food and agriculture, because focusing on nutrition through food security alone will not solve the wider needs of malnourished populations. Metrics for measuring success in nutrition should overlap with food security, but not completely. Other factors such as the impact of nutrition on education, health, and maternal and child welfare as well as behavior modifications should also be taken into account.

- iii. Gender-responsive programming should build on the work already performed and more deeply integrate these considerations into operational planning. In addition, gender should cut across and be included in all programming, including food and nutrition security programming.
- iv. Increased data transparency is critical to driving long-term change. Improvements have been made, including the creation of the Foreign Assistance Dashboard, yet more is needed for increased transparency, especially with the call for increased funding. Specifically, greater transparency is needed on how nutrition funding is allocated and used in

programming as well as for determining how “climate-smart” agricultural programs are designated. Finally, using metrics to dictate program and staffing changes is critical to ensure sustainability and efficacy of these changes.

The Biden administration launched in January 2021 with unprecedented challenges and will need a bold vision for what the United States can accomplish over the next four years. While US food and nutrition security programming has been successful in the past, there are opportunities for improvement to ensure continued success. The administration has the opportunity to build on a solid foundation and expand the number of beneficiaries of US generosity and technical knowledge to build back an even better future.



Endorsement

Cochairs

Catherine Bertini, Executive Director, UN World Food Programme (1992–2002); Distinguished Fellow, Chicago Council on Global Affairs

Ertharin Cousin, Visiting Scholar at the Center on Food Security and the Environment, Stanford University; Executive Director, UN World Food Programme (2012–2017); Distinguished Fellow, Chicago Council on Global Affairs

Endorsers

Tom Arnold, Chair, Irish 2030 Agri-Food Strategy Committee

Per Pinstrup Anderson, Professor Emeritus, Cornell University; Adjunct Professor, Copenhagen University

Doug Bereuter, President Emeritus, Asia Foundation; Member of Congress (1979–2004); Distinguished Fellow, Chicago Council on Global Affairs

Marshall Bouton, Acting Director and Visiting Scholar, Center for the Advanced Study of India, University of Pennsylvania; President Emeritus, Chicago Council on Global Affairs

Wendy Chamberlin, Former Acting UN High Commissioner for Refugees; Former US Ambassador to Pakistan and Laos

Ivo Daalder, President, Chicago Council on Global Affairs

Gebisa Ejeta, Distinguished Professor, Purdue University; 2009 World Food Prize Laureate

Cutberto Garza, Professor and Director, Division of Nutritional Sciences, Cornell University

Dan Glickman, US Secretary of Agriculture (1995–2001); Member of Congress (1977–1995); Distinguished Fellow, Chicago Council on Global Affairs

Wanjiru Kamau-Rutenberg, Director, African Women in Agricultural Research and Development (AWARD)

Carolyn Miles, Professor of Practice at Maxwell School, Syracuse University; Former CEO, Save the Children

Lisa Moon, President and CEO, The Global FoodBanking Network

Namanga Ngongi, Deputy Executive Director, World Food Programme (1994–2001); President of AGRA (2007–2012)

Paul Schickler, Owner, Ill Ag. LLC; Retired, President, DuPont Pioneer

Robert Thompson, Professor Emeritus, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign; Nonresident Senior Fellow, Chicago Council on Global Affairs; Senior Advisor, Center for Strategic and International Studies

Roger Thurow, Senior Fellow, Chicago Council on Global Affairs

Ann Veneman, Executive Director, UNICEF (2005–2010); US Secretary of Agriculture (2001–2005)

Joachim von Braun, Chair of the Scientific Group, UN Food Systems Summit; Professor for Economic and Technological Change and Director, Center for Development Research (ZEF), Bonn University

Consulted

Mark Green, Administrator, USAID (2017–2020)

Endnotes

1. FAO et al., *The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2020: Transforming Food Systems for Affordable Healthy Diets* (Rome: FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP, and WHO, 2020), <https://doi.org/10.4060/ca9692en>.
2. FAO et al., *The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2020*.
3. “COVID-19 Will Double Number of People Facing Food Crises Unless Swift Action Is Taken,” World Food Programme, April 21, 2020, <https://www.wfp.org/news/covid-19-will-double-number-people-facing-food-crises-unless-swift-action-taken>.
4. Andrew Crane-Droesch et al., *Climate Change and Agricultural Risk Management into the 21st Century*, ERR-266 (Washington, DC: United States Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service, July 2019).
5. Mark Essig, “A Quarter of the Global Pig Population Has Been Wiped Out. Here’s Why,” *The Washington Post*, January 6, 2020, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2020/01/06/why-global-swine-fever-epidemic-is-hitting-poor-people-hardest>.
6. FAO et al., *The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2017: Building Resilience for Peace and Food Security* (Rome: FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP, and WHO, 2017), <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i7695e.pdf>.
7. World Food Programme, *2020 - Global Report on Food Crises* (Rome: World Food Programme, 2020), <https://www.wfp.org/publications/2020-global-report-food-crises>.
8. Emi Suzuki, “The Number of Refugees Has Increased 70% Since 2011,” *World Bank Data Blog*, The World Bank, June 19, 2019, <https://blogs.worldbank.org/opendata/newly-released-data-show-refugee-numbers-record-levels>.
9. United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, *Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2019* (Copenhagen: UNHCR Global Data Service, 2020).
10. “Sahel Emergency,” World Food Programme, accessed November 24, 2020, <https://www.wfp.org/emergencies/sahel-emergency>.
11. “Daily Confirmed New Cases,” Johns Hopkins University, Coronavirus Resource Center, accessed December 2, 2020, <https://coronavirus.jhu.edu/data/animated-world-map>.
12. “COVID-19: Examining Theories for Africa’s Low Death Rates,” Inter Press Service News Agency, October 11, 2020, <http://www.ipsnews.net/2020/10/covid-19-examining-theories-africas-low-death-rates>.
13. “New Covid Variants Fuelling Africa’s Second Wave,” World Health Organization, January 28, 2021, <https://www.afro.who.int/news/new-covid-19-variants-fuelling-africas-second-wave>.
14. Attila Jámbor, Péter Czine, and Péter Balogh, “The Impact of the Coronavirus on Agriculture: First Evidence Based on Global Newspapers,” *Sustainability* 12, no. 11 (2020): 4535, <https://doi.org/10.3390/su12114535>.
15. Lauren Bauer, “Hungry at Thanksgiving: A Fall 2020 Update on Food Insecurity in the U.S.,” Brookings Institution, November 23, 2020, <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/up-front/2020/11/23/hungry-at-thanksgiving-a-fall-2020-update-on-food-insecurity-in-the-u-s>; World Food Programme, “COVID-19 Will Double Number of People Facing Food Crises.”
16. David Yaffe-Bellany and Michael Corkery, “Dumped Milk, Smashed Eggs, Plowed Vegetables: Food Waste of the Pandemic,” *New York Times*, April 11, 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/04/11/business/coronavirus-destroying-food.html>.
17. Rajesh Roy and Vibhuti Agarwal, “India’s Food Supply Chain Frays as People Stay Home,” *Wall Street Journal*, April 8, 2020, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/indias-food-supply-chain-frays-as-people-stay-home-11586343607>; Dionysis Bochtis et al., “Agricultural Workforce Crisis in Light of the COVID-19 Pandemic,” *Sustainability* 12, no. 19 (2020): 8212, <https://doi.org/10.3390/su12198212>.
18. Sun Yu, “China’s Farmers Fear Food Shortages After Coronavirus Restrictions,” *Financial Times*, March 17, 2020, <https://www.ft.com/content/cafb828e-6423-11ea-b3f3-fe4680ea68b5>.
19. “Improving Food Security & Nutrition Around the World,” Home Page, Feed the Future, last modified October 5, 2020, <https://www.feedthefuture.gov>.
20. Daniel R. Coats, *Worldwide Threat Assessment of the US Intelligence Community* (Washington, DC: Office of the Director of National Intelligence, 2019), <https://www.dni.gov/files/ODNI/documents/2019-ATA-SFR---SSCI.pdf>.
21. Albino Maggio, Tine Van Crielinge, and Jean Paul Malingreau, *Global Food Security 2030: Assessing Trends with a View to Guiding Future EU Policies* (Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2015), <https://doi.org/10.2788/5992>.
22. IFPRI, *2020 Global Food Policy Report: Building Inclusive Food Systems* (Washington, DC: International Food Policy Research Institute, 2020), <https://doi.org/10.2499/9780896293670>.
23. Sharad Tandon et al., *Progress and Challenges in Global Food Security*, EIB-175 (Washington, DC: United States Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service, July 2017), <https://www.ers.usda.gov/webdocs/publications/84526/eib-175.pdf>.

24. Mark W. Rosegrant, *From Scarcity to Security: Managing Water for a Nutritious Food Future* (Chicago: Chicago Council on Global Affairs, March 2019), <https://www.thechicagocouncil.org/research/report/scarcity-security-managing-water-nutritious-food-future>.
25. FAO et al., *The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2019: Safeguarding Against Economic Slowdowns and Downturns* (Rome: FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP, and WHO, 2019), <http://www.fao.org/3/ca5162en/ca5162en.pdf>.
26. "The Journey to Self-Reliance," United States Agency for International Development, <https://www.usaid.gov/selfreliance>.
27. Cecilia Brady, Brett Johnson, and Tess Zakaras, *Local Private Sector Partnerships: Assessing the State of Practice in USAID's Partnerships with Local Private Sector Actors* (Washington, DC: United States Agency for International Development, November 2015), <https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/15396/Local%20Private%20Sector%20Partnerships%20Feb%2016%20update%20to%20cover.pdf>.
28. Felix Kwame Yeboah, *Youth for Growth: Transforming Economies Through Agriculture* (Chicago: Chicago Council on Global Affairs, March 2018), <https://www.thechicagocouncil.org/research/report/youth-growth-transforming-economies-through-agriculture>.
29. FAO et al., *The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2017*.
30. Hope Michelson, "A 'Resilient' Food System Built on Systemic Vulnerabilities," *Agri-Pulse*, June 24, 2020, <https://www.agri-pulse.com/articles/13975-opinion-covids-impact-on-the-american-food-system>.
31. Joachim von Braun et al., "Ending Hunger by 2030: Policy Actions and Costs" (Bonn: Center for Development Research, October 2020), https://www.zef.de/fileadmin/downloads/SDG2_policybrief.pdf.

The Chicago Council on Global Affairs is an independent, nonpartisan membership organization that provides insight—and influences the public discourse—on critical global issues. We convene leading global voices, conduct independent research, and engage the public to explore ideas that will shape our global future. The Council is committed to bringing clarity and offering solutions to issues that transcend borders and transform how people, business, and governments engage the world. Learn more at thechicagocouncil.org and follow @ChicagoCouncil.



Chicago Council on Global Affairs
Two Prudential Plaza
180 North Stetson Avenue
Suite 1400
Chicago, Illinois 60601