

**STATEMENT OF THE *AD HOC* COALITION IN SUPPORT
OF SUSTAINED FUNDING FOR FOOD AID**

Submitted for the Hearing Record
of the
Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural Development,
FDA, and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
March 20, 2012

Mr. Chairman, Members of the Subcommittee, this statement is respectfully submitted on behalf of the *ad hoc* coalition composed of the organizations listed below. The coalition supports sustained funding for our nation's food aid programs, including the P.L. 480 Title II Food for Peace Program, McGovern-Dole International Food for Education, and Food for Progress. We strongly oppose USDA's proposal to divert funding away from Food for Peace.

FOOD AID'S UNIQUE ROLE

The donation of American commodities as food aid has been the cornerstone of U.S. and global foreign assistance programs since their inception, and the need for food aid today is stronger than ever. According to USDA's Economic Research Service, 12 million metric tons of commodities are needed each year to fill food gaps in the 70 most food insecure countries. Food aid, delivered in bags bearing the U.S. flag marked "From the American People" provides a tangible symbol of our nation's generosity and compassion and builds good will towards the American people.

In recent years, opponents of food aid programs have argued that they are not being administered efficiently, and that we should therefore just transfer these programming funds over to USAID's Emergency Food Security Program (EFSP). Through a variety of reforms, such as prepositioning commodities and application of the Famine Early Warning System, the speed of delivery and accuracy of food aid targeting has been dramatically improved in recent years, leading USAID Administrator Shah to announce last summer that the United States is now the fastest provider of food assistance at times of crisis and emergency. Rather than abandon the demonstrated, life-saving benefits of U.S.-sourced food aid, we should work together across agencies, and across stakeholders, to apply American ingenuity to these programs, and continue to make them the best, most efficient programs they can be while still preserving their unique benefits overseas and here at home.

In contrast to most other foreign assistance programs which just send money overseas, food aid also provides direct economic benefits here at home. U.S. food aid programs not only further our humanitarian and security goals by allowing Americans to share their bounty with the needy, but these programs also provide stable jobs for hundreds of thousands of Americans in our farming, processing, and shipping economic sectors.

DIVERSION OF FOOD AID FUNDING FOR CASH DONATIONS

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's proposed FY 2013 budget includes a request to divert \$66 million in funding away from Food for Peace, instead adding it to the \$300 million already designated for USAID's EFSP.

Mr. Chairman, we are concerned that this back-door diversion of funding will further weaken the Food for Peace Program, which has suffered extraordinary cuts in recent years. Although the program is authorized at \$2.5 billion, funding has fallen in recent years and the current requested level is only \$1.4 billion. This proposal is a replay of USDA's proposals for FY 2007-2009, which would have given authority to USAID to use Food for Peace funding for the purchase of foreign or "local and regional" commodities at its discretion. The U.S. government and its global partners already have significant cash amounts for local and regional purchases when it is necessary and appropriate. Especially in light of the recent cuts to Title II, it is our belief that the present funding level of EFSP does not need a further infusion of scarce Title II funds. We respectfully request that this Subcommittee again reject USDA's proposal, and preserve the integrity of the Food for Peace program.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

We respectfully recommend that our food aid programs continue to be funded at responsible, sustainable levels. The P.L. 480 Food for Peace Program is the world's most successful foreign assistance program, has saved countless lives, and has provided valuable jobs to the American people, who take pride in their tangible commitment to relieving global hunger. Its straightforward delivery of American food to the hungry fills a clear and immediate need overseas, and its unique architecture has made it a successful program here at home that has endured for over fifty years. Therefore, we respectfully recommend that USDA's request to siphon money away from Food for Peace be denied as it was in prior years.

America Cargo Transport Corp.
American Maritime Congress
American Maritime Officers
American Maritime Officers' Service
American Soybean Association
Central Gulf Lines, Inc.
Hapag-Lloyd USA, LLC
International Organization of Masters, Mates & Pilots
Liberty Maritime Corporation
Maersk Line, Ltd.
Marine Engineers' Beneficial Association
Maritime Institute for Research and Industrial Development
National Association of Wheat Growers
National Corn Growers Association

National Council of Farmer Cooperatives
National Potato Council
National Sorghum Producers
North American Millers' Association
Sailors' Union of the Pacific
Seafarers International Union
Sealift, Inc.
Transportation Institute
United Maritime Group, LLC
U.S. Dry Bean Council
U.S. Wheat Associates, Inc.
USA Dry Pea & Lentil Council
USA Maritime
USA Rice Federation
Waterman Steamship Corporation