

Keeping the Food in International Food Aid



Each year, our nation's international food aid programs help feed millions of vulnerable people around the world. These programs have enjoyed significant bipartisan support for more than 65 years and the need for food assistance has never been greater, emphasizing the need for the farm bill to continue supporting these essential programs.

The use of American grown commodities as food aid has been a cornerstone of U.S. foreign assistance programs for decades. U.S. commodities have been integral in allowing the U.S. to expedite hunger relief, increase resilience, and save countless lives. However, over time, these proven programs have shifted away from their bedrock of commodities to alternatives lacking in accountability, such as physical cash handouts in some of the most unstable regions of the world and using American taxpayer dollars to purchase commodities from foreign agricultural competitors.

It is time for the U.S. Congress to put the FOOD back in food aid.

PRIORITIES

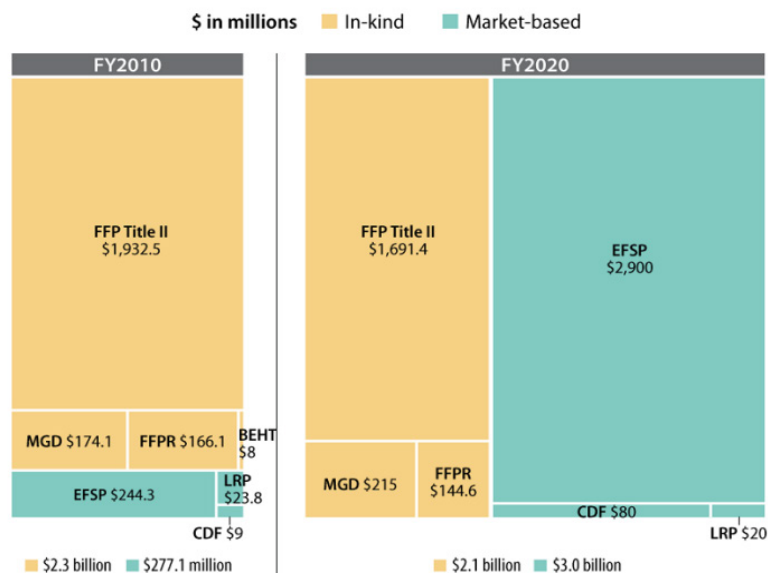
1. FOOD FOR PEACE. Congress should restore the farm bill authorized programs to their roots as pure in-kind commodity donation programs, recognizing the unique value these programs and American commodities provide as part of the overall humanitarian assistance tool box through the restriction of all other modalities. Erosion of in-kind donations while also expanding fully flexible cash funding in other programs is an unacceptable abuse of taxpayer dollars.

2. CUTTING COST. Congress should limit nebulous administrative costs and require that USAID use Food for Peace funding to purchase wholesome American-grown commodities and ship them to those in need overseas. Congress should require that USAID spend no less than 50% of program costs on commodities and ocean transportation and subject spending to rigorous transparency and accountability requirements. Currently, USAID spends only 32% of Food for Peace Title II funding on commodities and 10% on ocean freight.

3. FOOD FOR PROGRESS. Congress should revitalize the Food for Progress program by adjusting the CCC funding cap on transportation costs. To keep pace with inflation, the \$40 million cap should be adjusted to \$63.2 million in 2022, and increased annually thereafter. The ability to donate more commodities should not be hindered by an outdated arbitrary transportation cap.

4. BILL EMERSON HUMANITARIAN TRUST (BEHT). Congress should strengthen the Bill Emerson Humanitarian Trust by eliminating the complex USDA/USAID commodity release mechanism and allowing USDA to quickly release commodities when needed and by authorizing an automatic commodity replenishment mechanism using the Commodity Credit Corporation.

5. RESTORE ACCOUNTABILITY TO USAID by reining in USAID's use of waiver authority. Congress should require USAID to obtain the consent of USDA prior to exercising its extraordinary "notwithstanding any other provision of law" to bypass program requirements, such as the requirements to purchase only American commodities or label products as produced by the American farmer. USDA has the relevant subject matter expertise to make decisions around global food and agriculture supplies, commodity costs, and accountability to American agriculture that better match the waiver authority role than USAID, which has no appropriate expertise to assess these factors.



Source: CRS, using data from U.S. *International Food Assistance Report to Congress*, FY2010, and USDA and USAID preliminary food assistance outlays for FY2020