

**Written Testimony of Lucas Koach, Director of Public Policy and Advocacy,
Food for the Hungry, Presented to the House Committee on Agriculture
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Subject: Food for Peace, McGovern-Dole International Food for Education and Child Nutrition, Food for Progress, Bill Emerson Humanitarian Trust and the USDA Local and Regional Procurement Program

Mr. Chairman, Food for the Hungry appreciates this opportunity to present testimony today on the value and importance of U.S. food aid programs that address emergency needs and promote food security in developing countries. Food for the Hungry is a private voluntary organization (PVO) and also a faith-based organization (FBO) that walks with communities in need around the world, providing assistance in 18 countries. Our approach is partnering, helping people identify and address the impediments to development and then to build their capacity through skills development, increased economic opportunity, greater ability to engage their government officials and improved access to water, food, education, health care and other vital services. We are grateful for the generosity of the American people who contribute funds to our organization and we are grateful to Congress, which has consistently supported food aid and other programs that uplift the needy.

In developing countries, one in eight people are chronically undernourished (FAO, 2014), which decreases productivity and increases susceptibility to disease. Insufficient nutrition during pregnancy and in the first two years of life increases the chances of child mortality and stunts cognitive and physical development (Black et al. 2013). In addition, millions of people urgently need assistance because of wars and natural disasters. Improving agricultural productivity and the availability of wholesome, sufficient foods through well-functioning food systems in developing countries is the long-term solution, but for now, U.S. food assistance is critically needed.

Many of the communities we serve are in areas where there are few opportunities for expanding business and incomes. Struggling to meet basic needs is a way of life. In such areas, cyclones, droughts, soil erosion, remoteness, poor water and sanitation are among the types of challenges that keep people from feeding their children good diets and improving their lives. Helping people become food secure is a priority. Assuring people have access to and can consume sufficient food to meet nutritional needs is a prerequisite for a healthy, productive life, economic growth, and, in a larger sense, peace and prosperity.

Thanks to the steadfast support of the U.S. Congress, the United States is the leader in fighting world hunger and promoting peace and prosperity through its long-standing commitment to food assistance. Indeed, our country's leadership is demonstrated through its commitment of \$1.6 billion a year under the international Food Assistance Convention. This is 66 percent of total governmental pledges. The next largest pledge, by the European Union and its member countries, is one-fourth the U.S. level—only 17 percent of the total.

All of the food aid programs under the jurisdiction of the Agriculture Committee are vital for meeting the range of the needs. While many know of the use of food aid to meet urgent needs, the overall goal of food aid is to provide food where and when needed and also to build self-reliance in order to reduce the future need for emergency food aid. Thus, Food for Peace, Food for Progress and McGovern-Dole International Food for Education and Child Nutrition include technical assistance and capacity building to allow food insecure countries and crisis-prone, poor communities move from subsistence to self-reliance, so their populations may lead healthier and more productive lives. The Farm Bill's USDA Local-Regional Procurement

Program also offers a new opportunity to integrate local ingredients into food aid and, if well planned, to stimulate local production and processing of nutritious foods.

Important Role of Food for Peace (PL 480 Title II)

PL 480 is the most reliable program worldwide for fighting acute and chronic hunger. Countries that receive Title II food assistance have weak food and agricultural systems, limiting the availability of food. Producers in those countries face barriers as they seek to increase productivity and market their goods, including insufficient infrastructure, financing, agricultural inputs and services. Food safety is another difficulty. For example, aflatoxin, a poison produced by fungi in the soil, is prevalent and poorly controlled in many corn, peanut and sorghum growing areas of Sub-Saharan Africa. In addition, target countries do not commercially import sufficient amounts of food to make up for their internal deficits due to credit, foreign currency and other market constraints.

In addition to high levels of child hunger that leads to stunted growth, most Title II populations live in areas with poor water, sanitation and health services. Infectious disease and intestinal parasites reduce nutrient absorption and productivity, and can ultimately lead to death.

Over time, PL 480 Title II has been monitored, evaluated, adapted and improved and it continues to be one of the most effective instruments for reducing childhood malnutrition and fighting food insecurity. A more comprehensive list of bulk and packaged commodities and processed foods is now available, such as nut-based, high-energy pastes to treat severe acute malnutrition and Corn Soy Blend Plus, which is formulated to supplement diets of children between the ages of 6 and 24 months and to prevent malnutrition. A March 5, 2014 General Accountability Office (GAO) report found that in the past six years, the timeliness of PL 480 Title II food aid deliveries for emergencies has improved due to the pre-positioning of commodities at multiple strategic locations around the world. It suggests ways in which USAID could use pre-positioning even more effectively. Implementing agencies (USAID and USDA) should be encouraged to continue to take steps to improve commodity procurement, transportation and supply systems.

Title II Food for Development: From Subsistence to Self-Reliance

Section 201 of the Food for Peace Act lists seven purposes of Title II and six of them focus on using food aid in programs that address the underlying causes of chronic hunger and help people lead more productive lives. The premise is straightforward: Regions where there is extensive poverty, poor infrastructure and chronic hunger are prone to crises. When food aid is integrated into programs that help vulnerable households and communities become more food secure and self-reliant, they are less likely to need repeated humanitarian interventions over time.

Despite the wisdom of this approach and the positive results of PVO Title II development programs, returning year-after-year with short-term food aid to meet emergency needs has become the mainstay of the Title II program. We fully support food aid for urgent needs and disaster response, but for areas where chronic hunger is prevalent and food shortfalls are common due to poverty, remoteness or seasonal crises, being ahead of the curve with well-planned comprehensive development food aid programs is the best approach. When an emergency strikes, these are the most vulnerable populations. Even though progress may be made during better times, it is difficult for people to overcome hunger in their lives.

Thus, limiting or diverting funds from development programs to emergencies is counterproductive. Moreover, there are other options for addressing urgent needs if Title II funds are already committed. The Bill Emerson Humanitarian Trust managed by the Commodity Credit Corporation is designed to provide commodities for urgent needs. USAID

also uses International Disaster Assistance (IDA) funds for emergency food aid.

Nonemergency Title II programs, which are primarily conducted by private voluntary organizations, maximize the benefits of food assistance by combining food aid with skills development, technical assistance and capacity-building in very poor, crisis-prone communities. Maternal and child hunger is reduced, livelihoods are expanded and community resilience is improved, all of which help reduce the future need for emergency aid. This was the original design and intent of the Food for Peace Act. A USAID-commissioned independent evaluation of over 100 Title II development programs confirmed these and other positive impacts in very poor and highly vulnerable communities. We thank this Committee and the Congress for establishing a minimum level of \$350 million for these programs in the 2014 Farm Bill and urge vigilance to make sure it is met.

We also are grateful that the Farm Bill increased the maximum level for the section 202(e) program from 13 to 20 percent and expanding the purposes so these funds can be used for developmental, capacity-building activities. Such activities make possible lasting change by not just giving a person a fish, but teaching people how to fish.

PVOs identify the factors that cause chronic hunger and seasonal spikes in hunger and to address them through development activities as well as supplemental foods. Preparing a Title II development program proposal typically takes six months, but it can take up to one year. PVOs invest significant organizational resources to conduct quantitative and qualitative field research to identify target populations based on health and nutrition criteria, income, assets, and the degree to which households can meet their own food needs and in-depth situational assessments to identify barriers to food security. PVOs develop program plans in consultation with the targeted communities, incorporating strategies that –

- (1) During the course of the program (usually five years) will show progressive, positive change, such as improvements in mother-child nutrition and health, dietary and sanitation practices, land reclamation, agricultural productivity and marketing, household food supplies and incomes, and school enrollment and attendance;
- (2) Build local capacity and prepare communities, governments, institutions and participants to continue activities, reap benefits and decrease vulnerability to hunger after the program is complete. For example, through Food for the Hungry's Title II development project in Ethiopia, we have a formal partnership with the Organization for Rehabilitation and Development in Amhara (ORDA) in which 26,000 government and regional partners have been trained in technical and leadership capacity. Thanks to the developmental Title II programs, during the 2012 Ethiopian food crisis, 7.6 million avoided severe hunger.

Here are some examples of the types of program activities:

- Locally-appropriate methods for improving child nutrition:*** Nearly all Title II development program incorporate a maternal-child nutrition component. Local organizations are formed to support better nutrition of women and children, use of latrines and other sanitary practices, and the development and maintenance of clean water sources. The practices used in households with nutritionally thriving children in communities that otherwise suffer high rates of malnutrition can be identified and used as positive examples. Community members volunteer to participate in “training of trainer” sessions and to lead “mothers clubs” or “Care Groups” that provide training and outreach within the community.
- Stabilizing and improving agriculture, nutrition and incomes:***

Eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) has suffered with conflict for many years. Under a five-year Title II development program, Food for the Hungry uses a variety of community-based mobilization, training and technical assistance strategies to stabilize populations in South Kivu and Katanga provinces, improve nutrition and allow the communities to build a more promising future. Beneficiaries include returning refugees, internally displaced people, and more permanent communities. Thousands of houses have been built; farmers have increased production and incomes due to training in improved agricultural practices and linkages to markets; and the communities now have access to a more diverse and abundant food supply. Gender-based violence is being combatted with innovative media campaigns and nutritional support has been provided to pregnant and lactating women and children under 59 months old.

In just one region in the Nyalugana valley, working with local community leaders, FH has converted 914 hectares (over seven times the size of the National Mall) of valley land that previously was not arable into productive fields bringing sustainable crop production and livelihoods to over 13,000 households. New markets are forming, roads are being built, and clinics and schools are being constructed. FH recently shared these encouraging results with DRC government ministers and other key stakeholders in the capital of Kinshasa this summer. In a country that has seen much despair, there is much hope.

Amhara Region of Ethiopia is home to 31% of that country's food insecure population and site of Food for the Hungry's five-year Title II program that started in October 2011 to assist more than 300,000 food insecure individuals that cannot grow enough food to meet year round needs. Due to low rainfall, infertile soil, degraded mountainous environment and limited market access, nine rural districts 350 km north of Addis Ababa are particularly prone to chronic food insecurity. Our food for work program uses food as payment (5 days per month in return for 15 kgs of wheat, 1.5 kgs of peas and .5 liters of vegetable oil) on public works that are transforming the landscape into productive land. It includes terracing, reforestation, rainwater catchment to restore springs, construction and maintenance of safe drinking water sources, and agriculture rehabilitation. These natural resource rehabilitation activities restore soil fertility and the surrounding environment as part of Ethiopia's Productive Safety Net Program. Volunteer cascade groups and Care Groups are reaching 30,000 young mothers with vital health and nutrition education. Over 8,400 mothers participate in village savings and loan groups – precursors to microfinance. Ninety-one percent of beneficiaries increased agriculture production, which is also responsible for an 88 percent increase in diet diversity and improved nutrition scores. Seventy-five percent have improved drinking water systems. Through the development of farmer cooperatives, farmers now produce not only for local needs, but for markets outside their communities. As a result 89 percent increased their incomes.

The Evolution of McGovern-Dole Food for Education.

When first started, McGovern-Dole was seen as a way to deliver school meals and take-home food packages to encourage more poor families to send both their boy and girl children to school. Household chores and the need for additional wage-earners were seen as key barriers to education. When developing needs assessments and program plans, it quickly became apparent that it was necessary to address other barriers to education, as well. Many schools were in disrepair and the curriculum and teaching methods were not very effective, which made parents question the value of an education. Thus, PVOs encouraged and were pleased by USDA's decision to address both the nutritional and educational value of the program. Because of PVOs' ability to tailor each program to address local needs and conditions and organize parent-teacher associations, community-support organizations, community contributions, teacher training and curriculum improvement and other program enhancements, McGovern-Dole Food for Education programs have taken root and created sustainable benefits.

Food for Progress

Also administered by USDA, Food for Progress provides commodities to countries that are enacting economic reforms to support improvements in their agricultural and food systems. Through partnerships with PVOs and others, this program uniquely targets specific challenges to expansion of vibrant agricultural systems and links farmers, processors and other in the food value chain in order to promote economic growth and food security.

It also provides good examples of when and where monetization is a tool in the field of development especially for spurring stability and economic activity in net food-importing countries that, due to financial and market constraints, are not able to procure sufficient amounts of food on the world market. The primary purpose, therefore, is to meet commodity shortfalls in developing countries; however, through innovative programming, it can have additional economic benefits. For example, the current USDA Food for Progress program in Jordan is helping a U.S. ally that is hosting thousands of Syrian refugees meet its wheat shortfall, which the proceeds from the sale of the wheat can support continued growth in their agricultural economy—a double benefit from one contribution.

We wish to acknowledge and thank this Committee's leadership in reauthorizing international food aid programs in the 2014 Farm Bill: preserving this unique and important US global food security program and making it even more efficient and effective. We appreciate this opportunity to submit testimony and would welcome the opportunity to answer questions or provide additional information.