



# U.S. Policy Roadmap

## *A Drive to Transform Global Food and Nutrition Security*

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### THE ISSUE

*There has been strong bipartisan support for the United States to be a worldwide leader in addressing global food and nutrition security. Congressional champions are still needed, particularly under the Trump administration. Policymakers should elevate the issue within diplomatic and national security discussions, invest more in nutrition, better link humanitarian and agricultural development strategies, renew commitments to agricultural science, and scale up agricultural technologies.*

Over 90 newly-elected members of Congress will arrive in Washington this month, bringing with them new perspectives and fresh thinking on an array of issues important to their constituents. They will be soon inundated with information and facing a rising tide of requests for immediate policy attention and legislative action. This policy brief suggests that there are few issues more urgent and more important both at home and abroad than food security and improved nutrition.

### WHY FOOD SECURITY AND IMPROVED NUTRITION MATTER

More than 800 million people today go to bed hungry, and billions more have diets deficient in essential vitamins and minerals or are overweight or obese.<sup>1</sup> Malnutrition in all its forms is now the major contributor to the global burden of disease. And rises in hunger and food insecurity over the last few years indicate the presence of rising social and economic tensions and conflicts that threaten global stability.

The legislative framework for U.S. initiatives to address food and nutrition security is in place. A Farm Bill guiding

national action on these issues over the next four years passed during the lame duck session last month;<sup>2</sup> the Global Food Security Act was recently reauthorized until 2023 as the framework for U.S. support for food security in key countries around the world.<sup>3</sup> The challenge for the 116th Congress will be to ensure effective implementation of these key pieces of legislation. Through bipartisan policy oversight and timely funding decisions, congressional support matters. It impacts the daily well-being of billions of people.

While sustained U.S. investments in international development ultimately advance our country's economic development and national security interests, it is not (nor should it be) about indiscriminately putting U.S. interests first. Some pockets of the world depend on the United States as a leader and partner to address complex global development challenges. Our track record speaks for itself: from 2010 to 2017, U.S. targeted strategies and investments in inclusive agricultural growth and nutrition programming decreased poverty by 23 percent and stunting by 32 percent in areas where Feed the Future operated.<sup>4</sup>

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Numerous leaders and factors should be credited for Feed the Future’s success, from interagency coordination under the U.S. Global Food Security Strategy to the unflagging work of U.S.-based and international partners who implement programs on the ground. Progress hasn’t come easily or quickly. Robust results monitoring has proven that agricultural development tools can work, particularly when combined with effective enabling environments and country-led approaches.

But now is not the time to just sit back and applaud our inspiring progress, collaborative leadership, or legislative victories. Despite targeted achievements, for three years in a row global hunger has risen.<sup>5</sup> Progress to reach the UN Sustainable Development Goals are not currently on track to reverse the climbing trend of undernourishment, much less to eradicate hunger by 2020.<sup>6</sup> Despite admirable global efforts like Scaling Up Nutrition and the New Alliance for Food Security and Nutrition, why does it feel like we are being pushed slowly backward down a mountain of

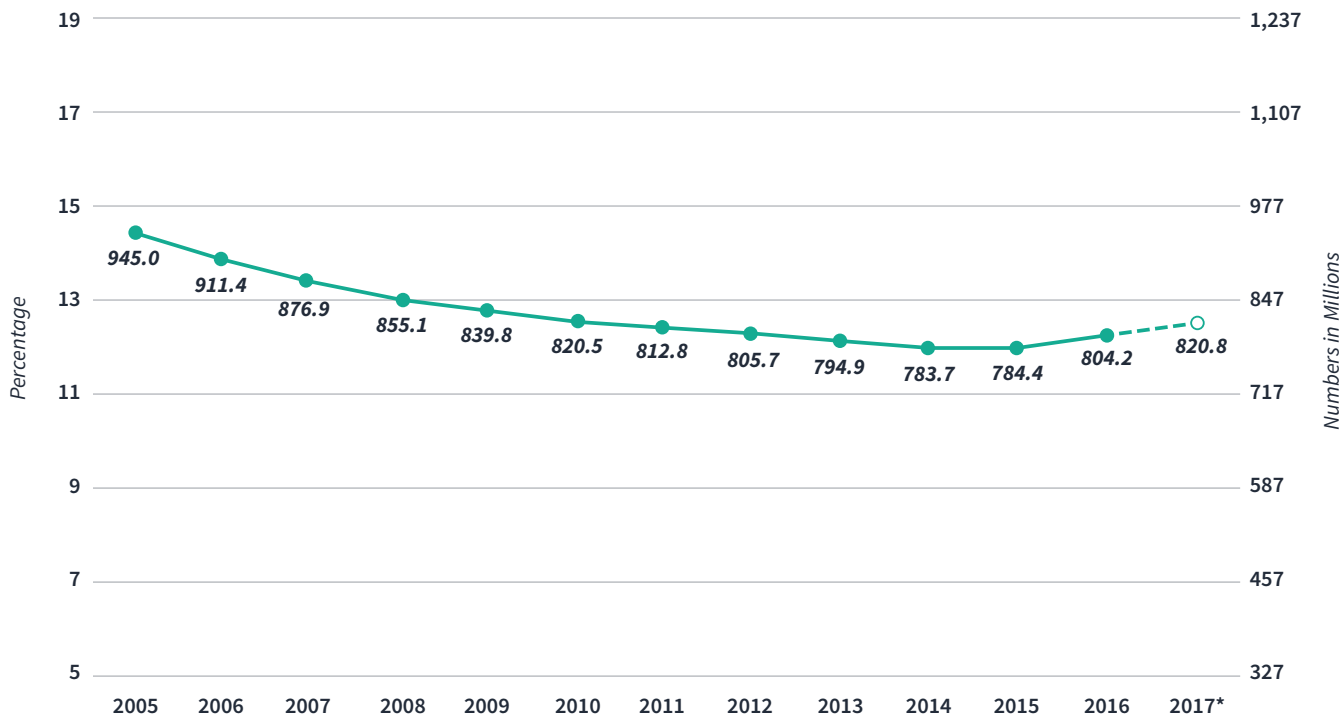
progress? Protracted conflicts, climate change, and mass migration—which are inexorably linked—are primary drivers. And these trends are getting worse, not better.

WHY DOES THE UNITED STATES NEED TO LEAD?

The United States has a long, proud history as a leader in food security from a research, humanitarian, and development perspective: a U.S. scientist, later coined the “Father of the Green Revolution,” saved one billion lives from starvation in the 1960s through agricultural research and technology development; U.S. tax dollars provided a record-setting \$8 billion in humanitarian assistance in fiscal year 2017, making the United States by far the largest single donor responding to natural and man-made crises;<sup>7</sup> and Feed the Future estimates that it has lifted 23.4 million people out of poverty since 2010.<sup>89</sup>

When the United States leads, other nations follow. President George W. Bush recognized the scourge of growing levels of HIV/AIDS infection and, with congressional support, launched PEPFAR in 2003 as a pathbreaking bilateral commitment to HIV/AIDS prevention and treatment. President Obama’s decision at the 2009 G8 Summit in L’Aquila to commit \$3.5 billion in U.S. support for agricultural development mobilized resources more than

UNDERNOURISHED PEOPLE IN THE WORLD SINCE 2005



Source: UN Food and Agriculture Organization via UNFAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP, and WHO, The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2018: Building Climate Resilience for Food Security and Nutrition

\*Projected values, illustrated by dotted lines and empty circle

six times the U.S. commitment.<sup>10</sup> There hasn't been the same level of political action on agriculture or nutrition for nearly a decade, despite strong evidence that investments in agriculture and nutrition have a high return on investment and is an effective tool for poverty reduction.<sup>1112</sup> Sustainable food systems made the cut as a top agenda item for the G20 meeting held in Argentina in early December, but the United States has clearly stepped back from a global leadership role. The world needs a L'Aquila-level moment in 2019.

Even though improving global food security aligns with the economic and national security interests of the Trump administration, there is no sign that the White House plans to emulate the kind of development leadership of the Bush and Obama administrations. At last year's G20 summit, President Trump did announce \$639 million in humanitarian aid to help four countries facing potential famines. In addition, the BUILD Act, a trailblazing piece of development finance legislation, was strongly supported by President Trump's National Security Council.<sup>13</sup> On the other hand, overall funding for diplomatic and development objectives have been subject to draconian cuts in the budgets submitted by the president in 2017 and 2018. Bipartisan congressional leadership has been effective in protecting the foreign assistance accounts to date, but the signals for continued U.S. leadership on key issues—economic growth and poverty reduction, food security, and improved nutrition and health—are not positive.

Congressional oversight and guidance are more important than ever to maintain the development leadership that the United States is known for. Foreign assistance is part of our moral fabric. The instrumental benefits, including economic returns and global stability, are understood and appreciated by both political parties. President Trump's signature reauthorizing the Global Food Security Act for the 2018-2023 period confirms the importance of these issues and the U.S. role in addressing them.

## **WHY IS THE GLOBAL FOOD SECURITY ACT POLITICALLY SIGNIFICANT?**

The groundbreaking Global Food Security Act of 2016 not only demonstrated sincere bipartisan U.S. leadership, with both sides of the aisle co-sponsoring and advocating for the legislation, but also transformed a presidential initiative into a national strategy.<sup>1415</sup> Signed months before the 2016 presidential election, the timing of the authorization was more crucial than most could have predicted at the time. It placed enduring congressional commitment behind a global food security strategy that was otherwise tied to the parting Obama administration.

The Global Food Security Act is a reminder that enacting policy change takes serious attention over an extended period, even when both Republicans and Democrats support the cause. The act was more than a decade in the making, propelled by a community of policymakers, advocacy organizations, and thought leaders pushing for the United States to step up. Among these stakeholders was a 2008 Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) task force co-chaired by champions like Senator Bob Casey (D-PA) and now former Senator Richard Lugar (R-IN). The task force crafted a bold, bipartisan vision arguing, among other policy points, for the United States to create a strategic approach to global food security that connects relief, development, energy, and trade.<sup>16</sup>

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## **WHAT IS THE CURRENT U.S. STRATEGY?**

That U.S. Global Food Security Strategy was submitted to Congress in September 2016 as mandated by the Global Food Security Act. It provides a comprehensive framework to achieve its vision of a "world free from hunger, malnutrition, and extreme poverty," replete with thriving economies, nutritious diets, and resilient households.<sup>17</sup> The strategy aptly details emerging global trends, from instability and conflict, to urbanization and gender inequalities. It meticulously outlines how to develop an efficient and inclusive agricultural growth program at the global level, covering everything from building market systems and trade linkages to integrating water and sanitation investments.

From a technical perspective, very little is missing. And that may be precisely the problem: the strategy is so comprehensive and broad that it lacks strategic focus. From the results framework to the monitoring, evaluation, and learning approach, the plan on paper is solid. Translating these strategies into activities on the ground, however, is much more complex. At the country-level, how do you prioritize target commodities and communities when funding is stagnant, but expectations have risen? How do you effectively partner with a national government that may have a well-written country strategy, but remarkably low tax revenues, limited capacity, or inadequate political will to invest in its own people? How



do you integrate market-led development programs with traditional humanitarian aid in areas plagued by political instability and violence? What is the best way for diverse U.S. agencies to collaborate and combine efforts at the country level when they have numerous competing priorities and potentially conflicting missions?

## LESSONS LEARNED FROM CSIS RESEARCH

Between 2015 and 2017, the CSIS Global Food Security Project traveled to three unique Feed the Future focus countries that represented the largest U.S. investments in their respective regions at the time: Tanzania, Bangladesh, and Guatemala. During these research trips, the CSIS team met with food and agriculture experts, donors, implementing partners, smallholder farmers, and representatives from the public and private sectors to explore the effectiveness of the Feed the Future strategy. Each country case study furnished distinct insights that CSIS translated into the *Tracking Promises* series, which includes analytical reports, short videos, private roundtables, public panel events, and congressional briefings.

In addition, the CSIS Global Food Security Project led bipartisan, bicameral congressional staff delegations to Senegal in 2016 and Ghana in 2018.<sup>1819</sup> The goal was to better understand how Feed the Future principles are applied, how the initiative's programs relate to other U.S. development investments, and how partners and beneficiaries perceive the impacts of those programs.

The intention of both the CSIS *Tracking Promises* series and the congressional delegations was neither to provide a technical assessment of individual programs nor a comprehensive evaluation of Feed the Future. Still, salient trends that policymakers should know about the initiative emerged from these research efforts and can inform sustained U.S. leadership moving forward. While there were many key observations made over the course of our research, the following four are worth highlighting:

- **Development goals are futile without country commitment.** Both the 19 Feed the Future focus countries, as well as the current 12 selected last year under Feed the Future 2.0, met specific criteria considered preconditions for success by the interagency team. One of these is the political will of partnering governments to take ownership of the initiative. This critical criterion is hard to measure and certainly doesn't play out equally in all countries. For instance, Bangladesh is often hailed as a model of government leadership. Rightfully so, as it has

allocated substantial resources—\$5.6 billion or 64 percent of the total budget—to its country investment plan and crafted robust national policies to tackle hunger, poverty, and malnutrition.<sup>20</sup> The UN's Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) found Bangladesh's strategic plans so successful that it replicated them in nearly 50 other countries. In comparison, a lack of government ownership can make it difficult for donors or implementing partners to implement new ideas or projects sustainably. In Guatemala, minimal domestic resource mobilization and an inadequate provision of agriculture, health, and nutrition services underscore the government's inability to hold up its end of the bargain.<sup>21</sup> Focus countries will often face capacity constraints at the national and local levels of government; however, experiences confirm that the *commitment* of government leadership to Feed the Future objectives is essential to success. Our experience raised an important question: if a focus country government fails to fulfill its responsibility in this regard, should the U.S. consider suspending or reducing its engagement in that country?

- **Strategic collaboration between U.S. agencies and initiatives matters.** Designing a whole-of-government structure to lead U.S. global food security efforts is necessary to achieve ambitious development goals and leverage the full power of the U.S. government. It makes sense and is the right thing to do. But the complexity of multiple agencies implementing a singular strategy cannot be overstated. Functional interagency coordination in Washington, D.C. does not automatically trickle down to the operational level (and vice versa). Divergent priorities or processes among agencies can be complementary at best and contradictory at worst. The presence—never mind proficiency—of the 11 U.S. agencies within target countries varies.<sup>22</sup> The one constant being that the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) is the lead agency, the dominant strategist, and the primary funder for most of the programs. Senegal is a powerful example of how to capitalize on synergies across U.S. agencies and assistance programs; infrastructure projects led by the Millennium Challenge Corporation were vital to the success of USAID's Feed the Future agricultural growth programs there.<sup>23</sup> Overall, Feed the Future's coordination with other U.S. government food security programs—including food aid through USAID's Food for Peace and the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA)'s McGovern-Dole school-feeding

program—remains weak despite improvements. The elevation of resilience as a development priority and the current reorganization of USAID has the potential to further strengthen coordination and better bridge the humanitarian and development divide.<sup>24</sup>

- **Nutrition interventions are not receiving the priority they deserve.** Despite the dual Feed the Future objectives of inclusive agricultural growth *and* improved nutrition, the allocation of funding to projects meant to achieve these shared goals does not often reflect equal prioritization. Compared to agricultural interventions, investments that specifically target nutrition have been meager and potentially insufficient to achieve ambitious stunting reduction targets. In Bangladesh, nutrition programming in 2016 constituted less than 20 percent of the portfolio's total investment, with most of these funds drawn from the USAID Global Health funding tranche, not Feed the Future.<sup>25</sup> Income growth and greater agricultural yields alone cannot combat malnutrition; indeed, economic growth does not inherently lead to improved nutrition or health outcomes. The balance of resource allocation across the Feed the Future portfolio should be realigned so that greater investments are made in robust and integrated nutrition-specific and nutrition-sensitive programming. Feed the Future strategies should consider fruits and vegetables as priority crops. Country strategies should also engage the private sector in biofortification efforts, particularly in countries where target populations derive most of their calories from staple foods that offer little nutritional value.
- **Access to finance can build resilience and change the lives of smallholders.** Smallholder farmer livelihoods are increasingly exposed to external shocks, including market volatility, climate change, and natural disasters. Building resiliency requires providing risk management tools, such as promoting off-farm livelihood diversification and strengthening national disaster preparedness and response mechanisms. Often overlooked in this equation is facilitating access to financial services. Microfinance institutions in Feed the Future target countries routinely see agriculture as risky, and fail to offer financial products suitable for low-income customers, farmers, or owners of small- and medium-sized enterprises. When services do exist, potential customers often lack access to the information they need to take advantage of them. In

Ghana, only 5 percent of commercial lending goes to agriculture, and interest rates have risen as high as 42 percent in recent years.<sup>26</sup> Feed the Future-funded programs in Ghana are addressing this at the local level through village savings and loans associations and at the national level by working directly with financial institutions. Access to affordable financial services, paired with adequate financial education, can support productive investments, drive rural economic growth, and mitigate the risk of shocks. Plausible approaches to achieve this objective could include private- or public-sector insurance products, weather-indexed lines of credit, or producer collectivization and risk-pooling.

## WHERE DO WE TURN NEXT?

There are five new “roads” that U.S. policymakers should take to maximize our investments and sustain the drive to transform global food and nutrition security:

### 1. Raise the profile of global food security within U.S. diplomatic and national security strategies.

Linkages between global food security, political stability, and economic prosperity have been well established, from the urban food price riots in 2007 to the connections today between protracted conflicts and potential famines.<sup>27</sup> The intelligence community has recognized the threat that global food insecurity places on U.S. national security interests. U.S. military and political leaders have been vocal about the role that foreign assistance plays in the cost-effective prevention of further chaos, especially as it relates to the nexus between food insecurity and instability. Yet, food and nutrition security are far from a central pillar in U.S. national security, diplomatic, or military engagements.

The current U.S. National Security Strategy should be lightly applauded for its emphasis on leadership in humanitarian assistance. It gives support for “food security and health programs that save lives and address the root cause of hunger and disease” but is weak in terms of its understanding and prioritization for long-term international development programs.<sup>28</sup> Investments in food and nutrition security protect U.S. national security and create new markets for U.S. goods in emerging economies—two core priorities of the Trump administration. Yet, the White House has failed to strengthen global food security efforts within the State Department, make significant commitments at global summits, or prioritize discussions within the National Security Council.

Hunger and malnutrition contribute to key threats such as civil unrest and violence. Global food security deserves greater prominence within foreign policy debates and demands better coordination between development, diplomacy, and defense sectors. Whole-of-government initiatives like Feed the Future have proven both the effectiveness and challenges of integrating and leveraging resources across the U.S. government—from trade policies to Peace Corps volunteers—but it is past time to elevate efforts across diplomatic and defense departments and agencies.

## *Global food security deserves greater prominence within foreign policy debates and demands better coordination between development, diplomacy, and defense sectors.*

**2. Double down on nutrition.** We need to nourish, not just feed, a growing population. Malnutrition is a universal, costly problem. As the winners of this year's World Food Prize reminded us, every country in the world is dealing with at least one form of malnutrition. Eighty-eight percent of countries suffer from more than one form: childhood stunting, anemia, and/or overweight or obesity.<sup>29</sup> The burden of malnutrition robs the global economy of \$3.5 trillion yearly in lost productivity and health care costs. One in three people globally is overweight or obese, and the rate is rising faster than undernutrition is decreasing.

Nutrition interventions can be the catalyst for tackling all the UN Sustainable Development Goals, from environmental sustainability to equity and inclusion. With a \$16 return on every \$1 invested, nutrition has also proven to be one of the most cost-effective development interventions. Despite this high return on investment and powerful multiplier effect, nutrition investments by global donors are nothing short of abysmal at less than 1 percent. It is no wonder that the world is not on track to meet internationally agreed-upon nutrition targets.<sup>30</sup>

Agricultural growth programs that focus solely on traditional staple crops, which by and large provide limited nutritional value, need to be rebalanced with investments in biofortification, horticultural productivity, and behavior change and nutrition education. There is a dramatic discrepancy between the

amount of fruits and vegetables the world needs, and the amount produced.<sup>31</sup>

It is not enough for agriculture and food supply chain policies to be nutrition-sensitive; they must be nutrition-driven.<sup>32</sup> Nutrition investments and indicators should continue to be woven into U.S.-funded development programming and remain a top priority within the global food and nutrition strategy. Policymakers should support and expand global efforts like the Scaling Up Nutrition Movement and Nutrition for Growth and elevate nutrition commitments through sustained diplomatic engagement at global gatherings such as the G7 and G20 meetings in 2019.

**3. Better link humanitarian responses with development strategies.** The surge in global hunger levels over the past three years has been driven by political instability in conflict-afflicted regions and compounded by the impacts of climate change. More than half of the hungriest people in the world (nearly 500 out of 820 million) live in countries marred by man-made conflict.<sup>33</sup> Most of the countries facing pre-famine conditions in 2018, like Yemen, South Sudan, or Somalia, don't have the economic or political stability required to meet the thoughtful criteria to become a Feed the Future target country. Linkages between political instability and food insecurity are often touted as one of the primary reasons for sustained U.S. investments in agricultural development. Yet, long-term food security programming can only function in stable environments.

If the United States wants to address the root causes of hunger and poverty, its strategy must include investing in and linking up its strategies on governance and peace and reconciliation, as well as recoupling humanitarian assistance with long-term agricultural and nutrition programs. USAID has robust and effective humanitarian programs, from Food for Peace to those within the office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance, that targets the world's most vulnerable populations. But the nexus between emergency life-saving assistance and inclusive market growth opportunities needs to be further analyzed and better operationalized. The recent addition of Nigeria and Niger in Feed the Future's refreshed strategy presents a unique opportunity for USAID to align traditional food security programming with U.S. security interests, though it is too early in the strategy implementation to assert success or failure.

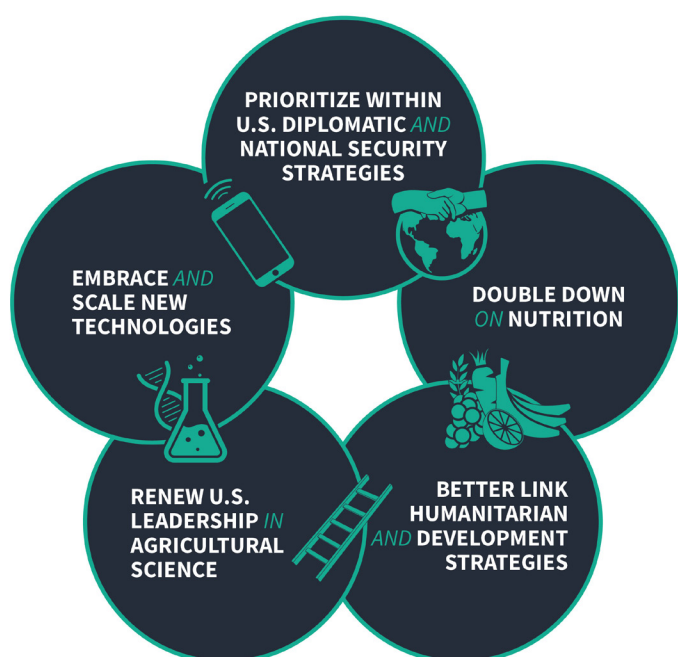


The good news is that Feed the Future 2.0's new strategic objective, "strengthening the resilience of communities to shocks that can lead to famine and political unrest," not only lifts up resilience programming but also pushes for more strategic collaboration between humanitarian and development aid.<sup>34</sup> Furthermore, the transformation of USAID includes adding "resilience" to the name of the bureau leading the global food security strategy, and the agency has a strong center focused on resilience.

**4. Renew U.S. leadership in agricultural science.** While the U.S. government has been cutting funding for agricultural research and development (R&D) for nearly a decade, rapidly-growing economies—like China, India, and Brazil—have been doing the opposite. China ramped up spending almost eightfold between 1990 and 2013, overtaking the United States as the biggest investor in public agricultural R&D in 2008.<sup>35</sup>

The dwindling U.S. commitment to agricultural science has both domestic and international consequences. The competitive agricultural productivity enjoyed by U.S. farmers is directly tied to a flood of breakthrough technologies and innovations resulting from R&D investments. Current levels of public research are needed just to sustain current productivity levels, let alone boost yields.

## 5 GLOBAL FOOD AND NUTRITION SECURITY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR U.S. POLICY MAKERS



Partnerships between U.S. scientists and international researchers can address pest and diseases not bound by national borders (e.g., wheat stem rust and fall armyworm), simultaneously safeguarding domestic agriculture against future threats and bolstering resilience and productivity around the world. This is especially important in today's global agricultural challenges: climate change, unfamiliar pests and diseases, and rising production costs, to name a few.

Good news is that Feed the Future Innovation Labs harness U.S. expertise by supporting collaboration between 70 top U.S. colleges and universities and focus country research institutions.<sup>36</sup> Investing in research partnerships like these not only advances cutting-edge technology to address some of the most pressing issues facing agriculture—like water scarcity or pest and disease control—but also builds local capacity, fosters good will, and supports the next generation of agricultural scientists and researchers in partner countries. One such example is U.S. engagement in Ghana, in which the University of Illinois is working with partners to boost consumption of soy products to improve protein uptake among consumers and the University of California, Davis is helping the University of Ghana to develop chicken breeds that are resistant to a highly infectious virus called Newcastle disease.<sup>37</sup>

**5. Embrace and scale new technologies.** Climate change will continue to test the capabilities of the global food system, from irregular rainfall that affects smallholder productivity (and migration movements) to warming temperatures that create the perfect breeding ground for emerging pests. Supporting researchers and entrepreneurs to advance innovative technologies that allow farmers to do more with less natural resources is a requirement to adapt to the new environmental norms.

Scaling innovations is only possible if governments foster an enabling environment that attracts private sector investment and if smallholders are provided access to affordable and practical technologies.<sup>38</sup> Community-level agro-dealers need to be equipped with training and finance tools to ensure that quality agricultural products like drip irrigation kits or deep placement fertilizers get into the hands of the farmers that most need them.

Gene-editing techniques like CRISPR, which could be used to modify staple crop plants like cassava

and sweet potato to increase resistance to common diseases, have the potential to transform agricultural production radically. With the right investors and market environment, digital technologies like the Hello Tractor app in Nigeria, which empowers farmers through mechanization, could grow exponentially. If embraced by emerging markets, innovations like cold chain storage or safe chemical sprays could revolutionize supply chains and reduce postharvest loss.

USAID administrator Mark Green's bold vision to end the need for aid begins with spurring innovation outside of the traditional development model. Creative initiatives like the USAID Grand Challenge on Powering Agriculture that supports clean energy ideas, or programs like Feed the Future Partnering for Innovation that helps businesses reach hard-to-access markets, are good models to follow. ■

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