

October 30, 2013

Dear Chairman Royce,

For ten years, I led the World Food Program, the largest food aid organization - in fact the largest humanitarian organization and arguably most efficient - in the world. Each year, we served 70 - 90 million people in ending starvation and rebuilding children's health and community resilience.

You, Marie and I met during my WFP time, through our mutual friend, Mary Ann Fish.

The American people have been crucial to WFP's lifesaving efforts - donating about half of the budget of WFP. All donations are voluntary; none come from UN assessed contributions.

Your leadership has been critical to moving this issue along.

As you know, In the decade of the nineties, the traditional donor community began to shift from giving in-kind food to providing cash. The Norwegians moved from fish to cash, Danes from cheese to cash, Germans from meat to cash, Canadians and Australians from grains to cash. This made our operations much more flexible, efficient and responsive by allowing purchases of food much closer to the beneficiaries - in neighboring countries or in local markets, and to spend more of these scarce resources on food rather than transport. In buying locally, we also maximize the positive impact on local and regional markets.

The USA, usually a leader in the field and usually the prime advocate of efficiency, is the last donor who gives primarily in-kind food to WFP and to NGOs. This is done at a high shipping cost, takes months to arrive, and sometimes competes with locally grown food and farmers.

That is why I strongly believe that the time has come to modernize our food aid policies. Change can only be accomplished by Congress. This Farm Bill conference offers an immediate opportunity.

The Trade title in the Senate version makes important strides in this direction; unfortunately, the House Bill erodes some of the current policies. Earlier, an amendment to the Farm Bill that you and Congressman Engel co-sponsored went much further. I applaud your efforts, and think that the close, bi-partisan vote received suggests that reform CAN happen.

In the spring of this year, when the Obama Administration made proposals to reform food aid, a wide range of former US and American UN officials of both parties readily endorsed its proposal. Each signer has worked closely with the existing mechanisms and can see the great merit of change. A copy of that list of signers follows this letter.

It is encouraging that you are a conferee on the Farm Bill. I write to support any efforts you can undertake to use the Farm Bill conference process to add food aid reform to the list of thoughtful, efficient, and modern changes you will ultimately approve as US policy for the next five years. Thank you for your leadership.

Sincerely,



Catherine Bertini
Executive Director, UN World Food Program, 1992 - 2002
Professor, Public Administration and International Affairs
Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs
Syracuse University

We welcome the efforts to reform America's food aid program

Feeding hungry people around the world has been a hallmark of America's international commitments for decades. Our generous provision of food aid and our nation's leadership has helped save countless lives.

As the frequency and urgency of crises have evolved, and as developing countries are building more capacity to grow food themselves, now is the time to reform our food aid program to reach more hungry people and to use our resources more effectively.

All other major food aid donors provide cash, rather than in-kind food, to NGOs, the UN World Food Program, and other international organizations, so food can be delivered to people in need as fast and as efficiently as possible.

A bi-partisan consensus has developed in the U.S. to support changes to America's food aid program. President George W. Bush urged reform and proposed budgetary changes multiple times, including in his last State of the Union address and in a U.N. General Assembly speech.

President Obama is now presenting a budget which advances these reforms further. If implemented, these proposals would enable the United States to reach 2 to 4 million additional hungry people, improve timeliness and effectiveness of food aid arrivals, support developing country economies, provide flexibility to food aid organizations, and save taxpayer dollars through new efficiencies in the process.

We support these measures and urge their implementation.

Signatories

- Elliott Abrams, Deputy National Security Advisor, Global Democracy Strategy 2005-2009
- J. Brian Atwood, Chair, Development Assistance Committee, OECD 2011-2012; Administrator, USAID 1993-1999
- Christopher B. Barrett, SB&JG Ashley Professor of Applied Economics and Management and International Professor of Agriculture, Cornell University
- David Beckmann, President, Bread for the World; World Food Prize Laureate 2010
- Carol Bellamy, Chair, Global Partnership for Education; Executive Director, UNICEF 1995-2005
- Howard Berman, Member, US House of Representatives 1983-2013; Chairman, House Committee on Foreign Affairs 2008-2011
- Catherine Bertini, Executive Director, UN World Food Programme 1992-2002; World Food Prize Laureate 2003; Professor, Maxwell School, Syracuse University
- John Bolton, US Ambassador to UN 2005-2006
- Dr. James G. Butler, Deputy Director-General, UN Food and Agriculture Organization 2008-2011
- Wendy Chamberlin, Deputy High Commissioner, UN High Commission for Refugees 2004-2007; President, Middle East Institute
- Gebisa Ejeta, Distinguished Professor of Plant Breeding & Genetics and International Agriculture, Purdue University; World Food Prize Laureate 2009
- Henrietta H. Fore, Chairman and CEO, Holsman International; Administrator, USAID 2007-2009
- Helene Gayle, President and CEO, CARE USA
- Dan Glickman, Secretary, USDA 1995-2001
- David A. Harcharik, Deputy Director-General, UN Food and Agriculture Organization 1998-2007
- Carla A. Hills, US Trade Representative 1989-1993
- Howard Hjort, Deputy Director-General, UN Food and Agriculture Organization 1992-1997
- L. Craig Johnstone, Deputy High Commissioner, UN High Commission for Refugees 2007-2009; US Ambassador to Algeria 1985-1988
- Jo Luck, President and CEO, Heifer International 1989-2011; World Food Prize Laureate 2010
- Senator Richard Lugar, US Senator 1977-2013; President, The Lugar Center
- Peter McPherson, Administrator, USAID 1981-1987
- Ruth Messinger, President, American Jewish World Service

- Carolyn Miles, President and CEO, Save the Children
- Jonathan Moore, Ambassador at Large and Director, US Bureau of Refugee Programs 1987-1989; US Representative, UN Economic and Social Council 1989-1992
- James T. Morris, Executive Director, UN World Food Programme 2002-2007; President, Pacers Sports and Entertainment
- Andrew Natsios, Administrator, USAID 2001-2006; Professor, George H.W. Bush School, Texas A & M
- John Negroponte, Deputy Secretary of State 2007-2009
- Dr. Philip E. Nelson, Professor Emeritus, Purdue University; World Food Prize Laureate 2007
- Raymond Offenheiser, President, Oxfam America
- Thomas R. Pickering, Under Secretary of State 1997-2000; U.S. Ambassador to UN 1989-1992
- Bill Richardson, US Ambassador to UN 1997-1998
- Pedro A. Sanchez, Director, Agriculture and Food Security Center, The Earth Institute at Columbia University; World Food Prize Laureate 2002
- Eric P. Schwartz, Assistant Secretary of State for Population, Refugees, and Migration 2009-2012; Dean, Humphrey School of Public Affairs, University of Minnesota
- Ritu Sharma, Co-founder and President, Women Thrive Worldwide
- Robert L. Thompson, Director of Rural Development, World Bank 2000-2002; Assistant Secretary for Economics, USDA 1985-1987
- Ann M. Veneman, Secretary, USDA 2001-2005; Executive Director, UNICEF 2005-2010
- Richard Williamson, Assistant Secretary of State, International Organization Affairs 1988-1989; President Bush's Special Envoy to Sudan, 2007-2009
- Clayton Yeutter, Secretary, USDA 1989-1991; US Trade Representative 1985-1989

Affiliations are for identification purposes only.

Recent news articles/editorials:

- [Lessons in refining food aid from 'Captain Phillips'](#), Editorial, Washington Post, October 14, 2013
- [How to get food aid right](#), Opinion, Christopher B. Barrett, CNN, May 20, 2013
- [More Food Aid for Less Money](#), Opinion, Joshua Bolten and John Podesta, Wall Street Journal, June 13, 2013