

TESTIMONY OF
U.S. REPRESENTATIVE JAMES P. McGOVERN (MA-03)

SUBCOMMITTEE ON STATE, FOREIGN OPERATIONS AND RELATED PROGRAMS
HOUSE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE

FISCAL YEAR 2012 APPROPRIATIONS
GLOBAL HUNGER, FOOD SECURITY AND NUTRITION PROGRAMS

I want to thank Chairwoman Granger and Ranking Member Lowey for allowing me this opportunity to testify today in support of funding for America's global food security, nutrition and hunger programs for fiscal year 2012. Specifically, I ask the Committee to support, at a minimum, the President's Budget request of \$1.558 Billion for the Feed the Future program. The majority of these funds are provided under the Development Assistance account for USAID. This total figure also includes \$150 million for nutrition programs within the Global Health and Child Survival account, as well as \$308 million for the Global Agriculture and Food Security Fund for multilateral investments through the U.S. Department of the Treasury.

In addition, I also request the Committee to fully fund the International Disaster Assistance account, which includes \$300 million for emergency food security so that food and other food-related interventions may be provided to vulnerable people in humanitarian crises.

Madam Chairwoman, I recognize that other critical food security and emergency programs are funded under the jurisdiction of the House Subcommittee on Agriculture; these include the George McGovern-Robert Dole International Food for Education and Child Nutrition Program and the Food for Peace Title II P.L. 480 emergency food aid and chronic hunger programs. I urge the Chairwoman and Ranking Member to work with your counterparts on that subcommittee to ensure full funding for these programs, as well.

Madam Chairwoman, I believe these programs are critical to ensuring America's immediate and long-term national security. I do not say these words lightly, or because they might have greater political resonance at this time of difficult budget choices. I believe this – and I think the facts bear witness to my assertion.

At the end of January, the United Nations reported that the cost of basic food commodities – basic grains, vegetable oils, sugar – were at their highest levels since the UN created this index in 1990.

World Bank President Robert Zoellick announced that the Bank's Food Price Index shows food prices are now 29% higher than they were a year ago. Zoellick warned the G-20 to "put food first" when they next meet. The World Bank estimates that these recent food price spikes have pushed about 44 million people into extreme poverty. That's under a dollar and twenty-five cents a day.

This is a global security crisis.

The lack of food security contributes to political instability – food was a primary reason people first took to the streets in Tunisia. Food and poverty were right at the top of the list in the squares of Egypt, right next to the call for political freedom.

In 2007 to 2008, the last global food crisis, there were major food riots in nearly 40 countries. Without greater investments to address food insecurity by the United States, other donors and developing countries themselves, it is unlikely we will be able to significantly reduce the current number of undernourished people in the world, which is currently estimated at nearly one billion people. This will have serious implications not only for all of our efforts to reduce poverty, but for political stability across the globe.

In May 2008, my fellow Co-Chair of the House Hunger Caucus Congresswoman Emerson and I were briefed by the GAO about the lack of coordination and continuity in U.S. food and development programs. We started calling for a comprehensive approach to address global hunger and food insecurity. And I would like to note that USAID and State Department officials within the Bush Administration began to examine how U.S. programs might better coordinate their efforts.

Under the leadership of Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and USAID Administrator Raj Shah, the U.S. government built upon those initial steps – and over a two-year period of time initiated a comprehensive, government-wide approach to reduce global hunger and increase nutrition and food security. Not because it feels good. Not even because it's the right and moral thing to do. But because it's in our national security and economic interests to make countries food secure, more productive, healthier and more stable.

This strategy is known as the Global Hunger and Food Security Initiative. It includes our bilateral programs and efforts with other governments and multilateral institutions. To be successful, everyone has to pitch in.

Feed the Future is the signature program of the U.S. strategy. It works with small farmers and governments to increase agricultural production and strengthen local and regional markets in order to reduce hunger and grow economies.

Other key elements include the McGovern-Dole Food for Education and Child Nutrition Program that brings kids to school and keeps them there by making sure they get at least one nutritious meal each day at school. This program has proven to be especially effective at convincing families to send their daughters to school.

And finally, there is our Food for Peace Program, which provides food to millions of women, children and men caught in life-threatening situations brought on by natural disasters, war and internal conflict. This program provides U.S.-grown commodities and locally purchased foods that literally keep people trying to survive the world's most dangerous situations alive.

Madam Chairwoman, I have never heard anyone say that they would like to see more hunger in the world – that they would like to see children too weak from hunger to be able to

learn, or young girls forced to work long hours because they are no longer being fed at school, or watch small farmers fail to make a living because they produce too little and what they do harvest can't get to local and regional markets.

I fear that this might very well be the consequences of the proposed FY 2011 budget cuts for these programs. And I strongly encourage this Committee to fund these programs at the levels requested by the Administration for FY 2012. The proposed funding levels are already a reduction from the proposed budget request for FY 2011. They cannot and should not face further reduction.

Feed the Future did not exist in fiscal year 2008. At that time, USAID only had about half a dozen agricultural experts on professional staff. In a word, Madam Chairwoman, that was a scandal brought about by prior Administrations of both parties. In the past two years, USAID, the State Department and other relevant agencies have begun to rebuild our professional capacity to carry out a comprehensive approach to address global food security, nutrition and hunger. Advancing agricultural development, productivity and local markets in targeted countries is at the heart of this initiative – along with increasing early childhood and maternal nutrition and reducing hunger among school-age children.

If we let stand the FY 2011 cuts to these programs – let alone make further reductions in FY 2012 – we would literally be taking the food out of the mouths of millions of children. We would be depriving over 18 million people the food that keeps them alive – in Haiti, Darfur, Afghanistan, Guatemala, Ethiopia, Kenya and elsewhere.

We would be turning our backs on countries that made commitments to us and where we made commitments to them to help boost the production of their own small farmers so that they could finally free themselves of having to depend on U.S. and international food aid to feed their own people.

Madam Chairwoman, this isn't a question of charity. It's an issue of national security – Broken promises have consequences. It's about what happens next when desperate people can't find or afford food, and the anger that comes from people who see no future for their children except poverty and death.

It is the reason why this Committee and my House colleagues have heard from current and former U.S. military leaders of the very highest rank, current and former secretaries of defense and state, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, CEOs of U.S. companies and the heads of scores of development and humanitarian organizations – all of whom have described how and why these programs are essential to America's national security and economic future.

I ask this Committee and my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to fund these programs at the levels requested for FY 2012 so that they can be successful. It really is a matter of life and death. It really is a matter of our national and economic security.