

It has been an extraordinary year for U.S. policy developments in the area of global food security. Spotlighted by the global food crisis, and championed by leaders at the highest levels of government, in Congress and among advocacy groups, food security is once again “back on the table” as a key element of U.S. development assistance policy. All signs point to significant new emphasis on agricultural development and food security programs, including cooperative development, which has been a key element of foreign assistance over the years.

## Background

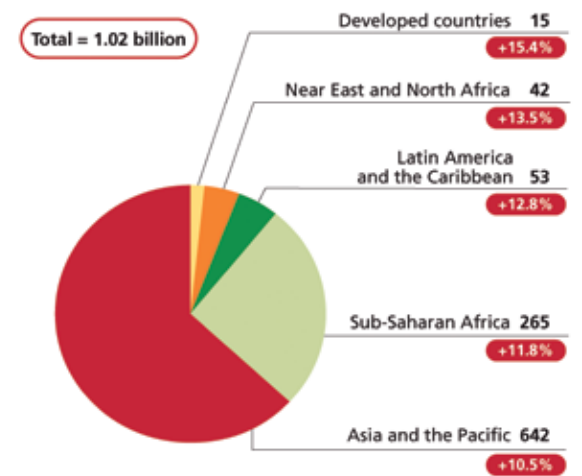
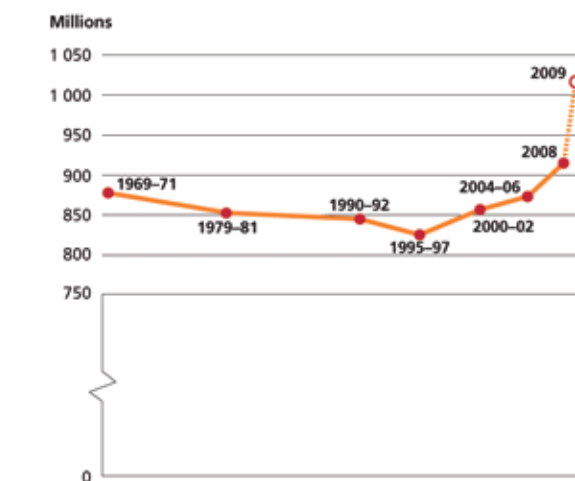
Resources for international agriculture and rural development, a crucial component of global food security initiatives, have waned in recent years. From a high of \$1.2 billion in 1985, appropriations for food and agriculture development at USAID had slipped to \$283 million in the FY08 federal budget. The United States has not been alone in placing a low priority on these programs. Overall, the world’s wealthiest countries, as a group, cut support for agriculture development roughly in half from 1980 to 2006, from \$6 billion to \$2.8 billion per year, representing a fall from 18 percent of all official development assistance to less than 3 percent (IFPRI). World Bank agriculture lending declined from \$7.7 billion in 1980 to \$2 billion in 2004.

Resources for global cooperative development also have waned. The 2000 Support for Overseas Cooperative Development Act highlighted the important contributions cooperatives have made to economic growth and agricultural development, and called for an increased role for cooperative development, but funding for USAID’s Cooperative Development Program remained low.

While development resources declined, world food prices increased, spiking in 2007-2008, which caused instability in developing nations and contributed to a global food crisis. According to the United Nations, the number of hungry people had reached 1 billion. These events prompted concerted action on the part of many agriculture and food security advocates, the new U.S. president and his administration, the U.S. Congress, and donor agencies across the globe.

## Broad Support Emerges

In 2008 ACDI/VOCA helped found the Coalition for Agricultural Development, uniting the private sector, NGOs, universities, cooperatives and faith-based groups to urgently support a greater overall U.S. commitment to agricultural development and global food security. The Alliance for Global Food Security, chaired this year by ACDI/VOCA Presi-



Above, two charts depict recent trends in global hunger. At left, the number of undernourished in the world from 1969-71 through 2009. At right, the undernourishment numbers for 2009 are displayed by region (numbers in millions). Source: FAO.

dent Carl Leonard, continued aggressive advocacy efforts, and many other groups either accelerated or initiated activities in support of renewed U.S. leadership in global food security. Groups such as the Alliance to End Hunger, Bread for the World, the Congressional Hunger Center, InterAction and several other NGOs came together to write the *Roadmap to End Global Hunger* and step up advocacy.

## Increased Funding

President Obama’s FY10 budget proposal supported a doubling of resources for agriculture and food security, and both the House and Senate appropriations subcommittee bills supported high levels of funding for this area of work. Proposed appropriations language also would approximately double resources for USAID’s Cooperative Development Program. Three additional bills in Congress include the Senate’s Global Food Security Act (S. 384--the Lugar-Casey bill); and in the House a comparable but more expansive Global Food Security Act (H.R. 3077--the McCollum bill) as well as the McGovern-Emerson bill (H.R. 2817), which grew out of the concepts set forth in the *Roadmap to End Global Hunger*.

## Political Leadership

The Obama administration is in the process of rolling out its Global Hunger and Food Security Initiative. Work in five broad areas is proposed: (1) comprehensively addressing the underlying causes of hunger; (2) investing in country-led plans; (3) improving strategic coordination; (4) leveraging the benefits of multilateral mechanisms; and (5) sustained commitment and public accountability. The United States will not be alone in these efforts: At the July summit in L’Aquila, G8 leaders pledged

\$20 billion to support food-security and agriculture initiatives.

## Challenges Ahead

The leadership vacuum at USAID has been a major concern in the development community but the nomination of Rajiv Shah as USAID administrator has raised hopes that the agency can begin to move forward. Shah, however, will face significant challenges moving into a post that has been unfilled for 10 months. He may also be responsible for an expanded agenda: Sens. John Kerry (chair) and Richard Lugar (ranking minority member) of the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations have stressed that development is integral to our national security and must be elevated to an equal role alongside defense and diplomacy. A new administrator will be dealing with a number of important policy initiatives underway, including a rewrite of the Foreign Assistance Act.

Although the ongoing financial crisis and other factors may ultimately scale back allocations for food and agriculture initiatives, this year’s policy developments have set the stage for a long-needed return to U.S. leadership in global food security. Many challenges remain, and facing them must be a cooperative effort. Perhaps the late Norman Borlaug, esteemed plant breeder and Nobel Peace Prize winner, expressed it best when he said, “I cannot emphasize too strongly the fact that further progress depends on intelligent, integrated and persistent effort by government leaders, statesmen, tradesmen, scientists, educators and communication agencies.”

Susan G. Schram is vice president of ACDI/VOCA’s Outreach and Cooperative Programs.