

## **USG Plans for Addressing Food Security in the Americas**

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IICA/OAS Oct. 1, 2009

I want to thank IICA for the opportunity to speak with you today and underline our support for your efforts to seek solutions to hunger in the Americas. The Obama Administration is committed to reducing hunger, and recognizes that investment in agricultural development can be not only a key to ensuring food security, but can also be a driver of economic success. As Secretary Clinton said in remarks to the Clinton Global Initiative last Friday, “Agriculture—which encompasses not only crops, but livestock and fish—is critical to economic growth around the world; for more than three-quarters of the world’s poor, farming is their only source of income and avenue to prosperity.”

Agriculture represents a vigorous economic engine for economies in this hemisphere, as economic power houses like Brazil and Argentina have clearly shown – with 6.7 % and 9.9% of their GDP coming from agriculture. By investing in agriculture today we make a choice to invest not only in our economic future, but in a powerful poverty reduction tool. Advancing agriculture allows rural farmers – who are most vulnerable to food shocks – to grow more food to feed their families and sell more of their products in commercial markets. This increased revenue generates greater income and allows opportunity to rise out of poverty. According to the World Bank, for every one percent growth in GDP originating from agriculture, poverty declines by as much as two percent. By unleashing the potential of small-scale producers, we substantially reduce hunger and create a more resilient global food supply for all of us.

On September 26 at the UN, Secretary Clinton laid out the U.S. government’s plan to address food security. The plan is guided by the principles established at the L’Aquila G8 summit last July:

- 1) Adopting a comprehensive approach to food security that focuses on advancing agricultural-led growth, reducing under-nutrition, and increasing the impact of humanitarian food assistance;
- 2) Investing in country-led plans;
- 3) Strengthening strategic coordination – both globally and within the U.S. government;
- 4) Leveraging the benefits of multilateral institutions, and
- 5) Making a sustained and accountable commitment.

We will work with our partners in the Americas to advance sustainable and comprehensive strategies that enable countries to ensure their citizens – now and in the future – will have access to the nutritious food they need for healthy and productive lives. It is clear hunger and under-nutrition undermine a countries' development potential. Together we can sustainably reduce chronic hunger, raise the incomes of the rural poor, and reduce the number of children suffering from under-nutrition. In order to achieve these goals, a targeted focus on agriculture development is needed. That is why the U.S. government is committed to spending over \$3 billion dollars on agricultural development over the next three years. For FY2010, President Obama has asked Congress for more than \$1 billion dollars for agricultural development assistance worldwide, doubling the amount the U.S. spent on agriculture in FY2009.

We will be looking to our partners in Latin America to help lead the way by developing comprehensive plans that target agricultural development as a primary means of driving economic growth and poverty reduction. We encourage your leaders to employ comprehensive plans that make agriculture more productive and more efficient, focusing on the entire food delivery chain – from the lab to the farm to the market to the table. We need to use all available tools to increase yield, and look for opportunities to add value to agriculture so that farmers can reap

greater profits in local, regional and global markets. Adding value to agriculture will create new jobs and help drive economic growth.

As part of a comprehensive plan we need to complement agricultural growth with targeted nutrition programs and increase the impacts of humanitarian assistance. Adequate nutrition is vitally important to mental and physical development of the very young – those between 0-2 years old. To address under-nutrition will require a concerted effort that emphasizes prevention, improves access to adequate quantities and quality of food, and supports programs for women and young children. Let me emphasize that we are not diminishing our commitment to humanitarian assistance, but we need the kind of humanitarian assistance that lays the groundwork for longer-term solutions to chronic hunger.

We must take advantage of science and technology to increase agricultural productivity, and protect our natural resource base. We must adopt policy reforms that can catalyze private sector-led economic growth. We must build the capacity of farmer organizations to provide services for their members. We must also do a better job of coordinating our agricultural development strategy within our countries, within regions and globally. We all will have a role to play in addressing food security in the Americas.

The United States will support country-led plans to increase the long-term sustainability of investments in food security and strengthen coordination among stakeholders. The development of these plans should be inclusive with all key groups represented. A strong plan will prioritize small holder farmers, especially women. An effective plan will also describe strategies for creating policy and regulatory environments that accelerate agricultural-led growth. This could include allocating a significant portion of a national budget to agriculture and food security and policy reforms

that promote private sector investment. Also necessary are plans that emphasize the protection of natural resources and support for environmentally sustainable growth. Finally, robust country-led plans will have targets, benchmarks, and a system for tracking progress towards clearly established goals.

Eliminating hunger is not something the United States can do on its own. We want to work together with all of you to make this strategy a success. As Secretary Clinton said, “If we can build partnerships with countries to help small farmers improve their agricultural output and make it easier to buy and sell their products at local or regional markets, we can set off a domino effect. We can increase the world’s food supply for both the short and the long term; diminish hunger; raise farmers’ incomes; improve health; expand opportunity; and strengthen regional economies.

Thank you, and I look forward to working more closely with all of you in the months and years ahead to make this vision a reality.