

Chicago Council Releases 2011 Progress Report on U.S. Leadership in Global Agricultural Development

Significant Progress Achieved But Hard Work Lies Ahead; Symposium Features Bill Gates, Rajiv Shah and Tom Vilsack as Keynotes

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Washington, D.C., May 24, 2011 – Significant U.S. achievements since 2008 lay a solid foundation to accomplish global food security objectives, according to the conclusions of a report assessing U.S. government progress to alleviate global hunger through agricultural development. The report states that continued, long-term American support for agricultural development is an opportunity for the U.S. to provide international leadership in the reduction of global poverty.

The [Progress Report on U.S. Leadership in Global Agricultural Development](#) was released today at the annual symposium of The Chicago Council on Global Affairs' Global Agricultural Development Initiative. The project is funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and chaired by Catherine Bertini, former executive director of the U.N. World Food Program and former U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Dan Glickman.

The report notes that pivotal changes – specifically within the organizations that administer agricultural development assistance, such as the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) – have put the U.S. in the position to lead global efforts on food security. It also states that, despite an uncertain financial climate, the U.S. should continue to step up its work in this area, as food insecurity will continue to be exacerbated by growing global populations.

“Relatively small investments in key areas like agricultural education, infrastructure and inputs like seed and fertilizer can have tremendous impacts in impoverished regions,” said Bertini, who along with Glickman just returned from Africa where they observed the impacts of successful U.S. programs.

“We’re witnessing the start of an exciting new phase of U.S.-supported agricultural development,” said Glickman. “Even though many of these initiatives and programs are just getting off the ground, we can see how new partnerships, technologies and farmer-support systems are bringing benefits to developing country farmers.”

The Progress Report gives the U.S. government an overall grade of B minus for its efforts to reassert leadership in global agricultural development. The highest mark, a B plus, was given in recognition of the recent changes within the government to centralize and strengthen agricultural development assistance. Noteworthy improvements include USAID’s dramatic increase in agriculture-focused staff, and impressive new interagency

collaborations that maximize the diverse skills of USAID, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the Millennium Challenge Corporation, the Treasury, and the Peace Corps, among others. The U.S. receives a B for its efforts to increase support to rural and agricultural infrastructure; agricultural research, extension and education all receive B minuses. A D was given to progress on U.S. policies perceived to inhibit agricultural development worldwide, as limited change has occurred in this area since 2008. The report states that there are several structural and economic impediments that will need to be addressed by the U.S. government, private sector, developing country governments, and international and regional organizations to continue to advance agricultural development.

In a joint statement Bertini and Glickman noted that, “The U.S. government is once again utilizing agricultural development as a means to fight global hunger and poverty. After several decades of decreased investment in international agriculture, the U.S. has made significant new commitments and its new initiatives are gaining momentum in a short period of time. The seeds of success have been planted – now the government as a whole must continue to support these efforts if they are to engender material reductions in global poverty.”

The day-long conference, sponsored by DuPont, Land O’ Lakes, and the CME Group, reviews progress on the U.S. government’s global food security strategy with participants discussing how long-term public and private sector support for agricultural development can advance global security, stability and economic prosperity.

Highlights of the event included:

- Keynote addresses by Bill Gates, USAID Administrator Rajiv Shah and U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack.
- Panel Discussions on the link between food security and major domestic and foreign policy issues, the role of the private sector in improving global agriculture and food systems, and how food security strategies can be leveraged to better address health, gender, environmental and economic objectives.

Download additional information:

[2011 Progress Report](#) (PDF)

[Occasional Paper "Strengthening USAID: A Timeline of Recent Events"](#) (PDF)

[2011 Symposium Agenda](#) (PDF)

[Leveraging Private Sector Investments in Developing Country Agrifood Systems](#), Policy Paper (PDF)