

GLOBAL AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVE

Symposium on Global Agriculture and Food Security
Progress to Date and Strategies for Success

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Rationale

Since President Barack Obama took office in January 2009, a number of policy developments indicate a shift in thinking about how the international community, with unique leadership provided by the United States, can best leverage its resources to address the challenges of global poverty, food insecurity, and malnutrition. In President Barack Obama's inaugural address he pledged to work alongside the people of poor nations to make their "farms flourish and clean waters flow". This pledge was followed by a call for a doubling of U.S. support for agricultural development at the G-20 meeting in April 2009. In July, the G-8 countries announced a new \$22 billion multinational food security initiative, which was more fully rolled out by Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon at the UN General Assembly meeting in September.

The U.S. government commitment to food security has continued into 2010. In the President's FY11 budget request to Congress, he requested \$1.844 billion towards a new Global Hunger and Food Security Initiative, and the Administration continues to appoint high-level officials to oversee the implementation of the program. Moreover, the World Bank, in partnership with the U.S. Department of Treasury will soon unveil a new multi-lateral trust fund, the Global Agriculture and Food Security Program, and the U.S. Congress is expected to consider global food security legislation this spring.

Although initial national and international political support for this new food security initiative remains strong, it still faces many obstacles to resourcing and implementation. To be successful, the Initiative will need to overcome challenges such as the weakness of U.S. implementing agencies, the lack of coordination among U.S. foreign assistance programs, competing Executive and Congressional priorities, and the question of will and capacity in developing nations. The next six months to a year will be a critical period in which the success or failure of the initiative might well be determined.

Purpose

In an effort to build and sustain the gathering momentum for change in U.S. food security and agricultural development policy at a key time in the policymaking process, The Chicago Council on Global Affairs proposes to convene a symposium on May 20, 2010 to review the U.S. government and international community's progress in addressing the problem of global food insecurity. The day-long symposium will discuss the Obama Administration's emerging Global Hunger and Food Security Initiative and Congressional perspectives on issues of agricultural development. It will examine strategies for sustaining political, financial, and technical support for these issues and provide constructive thinking on the policy and implementation challenges facing U.S. food security commitments. A report summarizing the conference presentations and discussions will be published and distributed widely shortly after the event.

Symposium Sponsorship and Audience

The Chicago Council on Global Affairs will sponsor the Symposium with a number of organizations that have a strong interest in U.S. and international agriculture and food security activities and related policies. The Symposium would bring together diverse stakeholders from international agriculture, food, and development sectors from the government, NGO, business, academic, think-tank, foundation, advocacy and international organization communities.