

USAID Administrator Rajiv Shah
Remarks to the World Food Prize Conference
Des Moines, IA
Friday, October 15, 2010

I'd like to thank Ambassador Quinn and the organizers of the World Food Prize for inviting me to speak today. I've been to this event for a few years now, and every year it seems its enthusiasm and exposure grows.

I think it's telling that after years of travelling around the world, the first time I run into Kofi Annan in an airport is in Des Moines.

I also want to thank two pillars of Iowa politics and the world of Agriculture, Secretary Vilsack and Senator Harkin, for their mentorship, leadership and advocacy of our cause.

As I said before, I've had the privilege of addressing and attending this gathering for a few years now. Each year, I've come to this conference, calling for a new approach that prioritizes agricultural development and breaks the cycle of hunger and food assistance we've witnessed for decades.

But today, I come here in a different role than I have in the past.

I now represent a government committed to an approach I previously advocated. I'm responsible for carrying out that vision; and I am dedicated to its success.

You've heard the President in his inaugural address; at last year's G8 summit in L'Aquila; and just last month in New York articulate his commitment to agricultural development and food security.

Last week, while accepting the George McGovern leadership award, you heard the Secretary of State—a powerful advocate of food security for some time—describe our efforts to increase crop yields, build access to markets, and use mobile technology to transmit weather and pricing data to smallholder farmers.

And you've read the prospectus for the Feed the Future program, heard about the \$3.5 billion we've committed to food security—beyond the food aid we already provide—and the \$18.5 billion in commitments that investment has leveraged.

You've heard these speeches, read these announcements, and seen us recite a set of core principles you have been espousing for years.

Now, if I were you, I'd have one question on my mind:

“What is actually happening that is different?”

I can tell you that today, we are focused on global food security in a way that, we have not been since the earliest days of the Green Revolution.

Throughout this government, our agencies are working together in a united approach to increase food security and finally conquer global hunger.

At USAID, we've established a new Bureau for Food Security, responsible for guiding and directing our agricultural development programs; with a focus on improving nutrition and serving women and girls.

We've also hired nearly 40 additional Foreign Service officers specializing in agriculture, raising our global food security workforce to more than 250.

We've created a new mechanism housed at the World Bank, the Global Security Food Trust Fund, that makes it easier for to invest in food security priorities.

This mechanism which uses open proposal rounds and independent technical reviews, has already led to commitments of \$224 million in 5 countries, but more importantly, it's created an avenue to broaden global participation in food security efforts by donors and recipients, and has recently announced a private sector window.

And we've unveiled the Norman Borlaug Commemorative Research Initiative, a new research and development initiative that will invest in transformative solutions to help farmers deal with pests, disease, and a changing climate.

One of the first priorities of this initiative has been to combat the most serious wheat rust disease the world has seen in more than 50 years: U.G. 99.

Although discovered in Uganda just 11 years ago, UG99 has quickly spread throughout East Africa, into Asia and the Middle East. We're already seeing UG99 threaten the food security and development gains of conflict-prone states like Pakistan and Afghanistan.

And 80% of the wheat varieties currently grown in the world—including those right here in the United States—are at risk from this new disease, posing potential losses of \$9 billion a year.

To combat UG99, we're working with the USDA's outstanding agricultural research service to support greenhouse research in Minnesota, and developing adapted rust resistant varieties in Pakistan, which can then be used in Afghanistan and parts of the region.

We estimate that these resistant varieties will be adopted by 3.5 million farmers on over 5 million hectares of land, yielding an additional 250,000 tons of wheat and generating \$63 million in smallholder income alone.

But this is just one example of our renewed commitment to science and technology. We are also working with the Consultative Group of International Agricultural Research, or CGIAR, to support their new "megaprograms."

These programs focus on high-potential research into new seed varieties, effective agricultural policy reforms, and better water and soil management practices.

We doubled our investment in these megaprograms, making us the single largest supporter of CGIAR.

And we're strengthening partnerships with the US Land Grant Universities. This year, we are making strategic investments in our Feed the Future pilot countries, focusing on beans in Central America and aquaculture in West and East Africa—and we expect to see between a 15 and 30 percent increase in bean and fish production in these countries.

Finally, we are transforming our food assistance program, in order to make it faster and more effective. We've significantly

accelerated our time to crisis to a matter of days, and are now the fastest provider of food aid in the world.

We've focused our assistance on vulnerable populations like pregnant women and infants as part of a new effort to prioritize the 1,000 days from conception to age 2; and we're responsibly transitioning away from monetized food aid where possible.

And to help create incentives for local agriculture, we've dramatically ramped up local procurement of food in instances where access, not availability, leads to crisis. This year, we've spent \$250 million in local procurement of food aid, up from zero just a few years ago.

But we're pushing ourselves even harder. We don't just want to buy local food aid from anyone; we want to try to create markets for the most vulnerable, smallholder farmers, those who are the subject of our Feed the Future strategy.

We do that in part by serving as a major supporter to World Food Program's Purchase for Progress initiative, dedicated to providing food aid procured from local smallholder farmers.

The \$20 million we've contributed to this program will directly increase the incomes of nearly half-a-million smallholder farmers. We genuinely believe in this approach, and we're exploring its expansion, particularly in places like Southern Sudan.

But there's more. What is really exciting, what I really want to share with you, is what our country partners are doing on the ground.

This slide shows two maps of Tanzania, showcasing the regions in that country that have poor or borderline food consumption, based on an assessment the World Food Program did just this year.

As you can see, food insecurity is spread throughout the country. From Kagera in the Northwest, all the way to Mtwara in the South East, you have a belt of states where hunger and malnutrition runs rampant.

That reality shows up in other statistics as well. One-third of Tanzanians live below the poverty line and 44 percent of children under five show signs of stunting. Malnutrition underlies between 1/3 and 1/2 of all infant and child deaths in the country.

Despite the five-plus percent GDP growth we've seen in Tanzania over the last decade, that growth is not sufficient and at current rates of progress, Tanzania will miss its MDG targets.

So, keep all of this in mind as you look at this map here, and notice the regions where food insecurity is particularly severe.

That's why we're joining the government of Tanzania and its partners—and we're lucky to have Ambassador Augustine Mahiga here to represent Tanzania today—to collectively place our bets...

...here.

This map shows the target regions and specific value chains that the Tanzanian government has chosen to invest in based on a smart, selective and rigorous analysis. This analysis is driven by a fundamental understanding of the fact that we cannot do

everything, everywhere and expect to do it well.

These regions demonstrate a significantly higher potential for growth, encompassing the major road, rail and electrical grid pathways of the country.

By providing a thoughtful strategy that offers a tight geographical focus, the government of Tanzania is able to lean on other bilateral and multilateral partners for complementary support so that we can all provide coordinated assistance.

While USAID makes the investments in agricultural value chains, the Millennium Challenge Corporation is rehabilitating the main trunk road in the country, and the African Development Bank is providing credit to help develop road infrastructure, providing quicker access to markets.

JICA, the Japanese bilateral aid agency is building an irrigation scheme and the World Bank is building a regional center of excellence in rice research.

To focus all the tools of our government, we are working with the State Department to support Tanzania to liberalize its seed sector, and reform taxes and export bans that prohibit market access and limit lending to farmers.

But it's not just the public and multilateral sectors that have strong, additive roles to play.

This coordinated focus on an area of potential productivity is helping private firms expand their investments in Tanzania.

Across this investment corridor, Yara is providing fertilizer, Unilever is looking to source sustainable products to foster demand and General Mills—thanks in part to a new partnership with USAID—is providing technical assistance to local millers.

But the main private sector partners aren't global firms; they include dozens of local Tanzanian firms that work with smallholder farmers to sell seeds process and transport products.

We're offering these companies debt guarantees through our Development Credit Authority, equipping them with the spark they need to mature their businesses and grow their country.

And today I'm unveiling the Feed the Future Private Investment Center; a new public-private partnership hub that will ensure we see this same level of private sector engagement in all 20 Feed the Future pilot countries.

This hub will expand on existing relationships with multinationals and local businesses, and facilitate engagement with new private sector partners. Companies interested in joining this effort can e-mail us at ftfbusinesshub@usaid.gov.

In addition to regional selectivity, our strategy in Tanzania concentrates resources in rice, maize, and horticulture value chains.

We focused on rice because we believe it can best spur economic growth, especially with new rice varieties developed for the region that can double current yields, benefitting 80,000 Tanzanian rice farmers over a five-year period.

We're developing Maize in the country's poorest regions to provide greater food security. If any of you saw Jeff Raikes' remarks yesterday, he showed a short film demonstrating the effects new strains of maize can provide, boosting yields by 30% in a drought. If we adopt these new strains in Tanzania, we can conservatively estimate that it would help almost 130,000 smallholders escape poverty by 2015.

Horticulture development helps improve nutrition in the country by addressing micronutrient deficiencies and diversifying the national diet. And it can empower female smallholders, because cultivation time is flexible, and less labor intensive. Since it can be intercropped with traditionally "male" crops, like rice, it gives women an opening to engage in more profitable agricultural activities.

So that's our strategy in Tanzania, and we estimate that our assistance will help lift more than 2 million smallholder farmers—the majority of them women—out of poverty.

But we will not take those numbers on faith. We intend to carefully measure and evaluate our results. As a field, we have traditionally underinvested in gathering baseline data and quantitatively evaluating our programs.

That is a trend we must reverse, and the US government will partner with host countries, the FAO, and the World Bank to do this important work.

I am excited about Tanzania's leadership and commitment, but they are not alone. Across the program, we are seeing so many other countries stepping up.

I was in Bangladesh when Prime Minister Hasina launched a new strategic approach that focuses on the Southern productive region to intensify its production of rice, wheat and maize, using new crop varieties that will boost the nutritive impact of these staples.

From Ethiopia to Senegal, governments are making tough choices to invest in one-or-two sub-regions, in a handful of value chains, allowing donors and private sector partners to concentrate their commitments.

If this approach works, in just the 4 countries I've mentioned, our interventions will benefit approximately 4 million farm families and help lift nearly 17 million people out of poverty. This includes almost 1.6 million children who will be able to escape a life of daily hunger.

Think about that number: 1.6 million.

A few years ago, I visited a hospital in Bangladesh and met 8 women and their malnourished children.

I remember day that vividly. I remember, above all, how quiet those children were. They didn't scream at the pain they were experiencing; they didn't cry for help.

Nor did they laugh... or smile... or speak.

They suffered in silence.

Staring into the eyes of those children dying of hunger—witnessing that same lifeless gaze on eight different faces—is something I will never forget.

It's an image rendered especially poignant for me as my wife and I prepare to have our third child.

So let's not forget what a powerful, meaningful thing it is to say that we have an opportunity to end that plight for 1.6 million children, in just four of these first twenty pilot countries.

And we have seen that success is possible. Malawi showed us how quickly a country can ramp up its agricultural production under the right conditions. Ghana showed us the benefits of steady reductions in food security. And Brazil showed us that smart nutrition interventions can amplify the positive effects of agricultural development.

If we can replicate those types of success in all our Feed the Future pilot countries, we will have laid the foundation for a sustainable, new Green Revolution.

Now, we should be honest about the stakes involved. For USAID, our agricultural investments are a flagship effort representing a new way of doing business—strategic, data-driven, and results-oriented. Our credibility—and my credibility as Administrator—rests on this effort.

For the Administration, Feed the Future is a core plank in the most important development strategy delivered by a sitting President since JFK's letter to Congress back in 1961; the same letter that led to the formation of USAID.

But our stakes are nothing compared to what the world faces.

We live on a planet whose population will grow by two billion in 40 years. In that time, 2 billion more people will join the middle class, completely redrawing the agricultural map as their diets and tastes change. And this will occur in an environment with decreasing resources, increasing demands for water and energy, and an increasingly unstable climate.

In the face of an anemic global economy and a constrained budget environment, maintaining a high level of donor commitment for this strategy will be incredibly difficult. Already, we are seeing our partner donors falling away.

Thus, we must not only be able to measure and demonstrate convincing progress in the window we currently have, we must be loud, persuasive and vocal advocates for the strategy we are pursuing.

We must build a lasting durable political constituency, domestically and globally, that maintains the commitment and focus that the world has now rediscovered.

We have seen the consequences of a world whose attention was distracted from the issue of food security.

We saw a Green Revolution bypass Africa

We saw famine after famine decimate countries from within.

We saw a global food crisis that pushed millions back into the grips of poverty and its brutal companion, hunger.

We have seen the repercussions of our inattention.

But now, let us show the world the power of our vigilance.

Thank you.