

Global Food Aid and the US Budget for FY 2014

*For I was hungry, and you gave Me something to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me something to drink;
I was a stranger, and you invited Me in. Mt: 25: 35 [click here](#)*

Of the almost one billion people in the world who do not have enough to eat, 98% live in developing countries; women account for 60% of those who suffer hunger; one out of four children in developing countries are underweight (World Food Program).

A change in how the United States procures and distributes food around the world is being proposed by President Obama. Congress will be taking up this item as it debates the Federal budget for FY 2014. The changes in the 1.5 billion dollar Food for Peace program involve a significant decrease in grain purchases from US farmers while increasing food purchases from local food producers in or near countries experiencing food insecurity. This proposed shift in the traditional Food for Peace program intends to support agricultural development and resiliency overseas while lowering the purchase and shipment costs associated with food grown in the United States.

Currently, U.S. farmers and shipping companies have been among the beneficiaries of the Food for Peace program. However, costs associated with their participation have been a contentious item for some international relief and development agencies. In addition to the financial costs associated with purchasing and shipping food from the U.S., it can take as long as 14 weeks for food to reach a country awaiting food aid. With potential income losses to local farmers and shippers looming large, there will be resistance in Congress to these proposed budget and program changes.

Many U.S. based international relief and development agencies praise this decision because lowering purchase and shipping costs will increase the volume of food as well as the number of beneficiaries reached by U.S. food security programs. Additionally, this strategy incentivizes local agricultural development by engaging local farmers in the market of international food aid distribution.

Other agencies such as Catholic Relief Services are more cautious in their praise for the proposed change. While CRS has supported reforms to the Food for Peace program, there is a fear that new protocols will inhibit an agency's capacity to move food quickly when global emergencies such as hurricanes, violent conflicts, or floods, occur. CRS is concerned that, under the new proposal, funding food for emergencies will be allocated within the International Disaster Assistance account, which is slated for cuts in the FY 2014 budget. It should be noted that the IDA account also provides vital humanitarian assistance, such as emergency medical care and shelter for victims of disasters.

To follow the developments around Global Food Aid, sign up for [CRS alerts](#).