

House Foreign Affairs Committee
Challenges of Global Food Security

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Chairman Meeks, Ranking Member McCaul, and distinguished Members of the Committee, thank you for having me here today. I am grateful for the opportunity to speak before this Committee on an incredibly important issue and one that is more pressing than ever. I want to start off by thanking you for your leadership. I know the reauthorization of the Global Food Security Act was just introduced and we were grateful for the opportunity to collaborate. I also want to thank Ranking Member McCaul for his leadership on the Global Malnutrition Prevention and Treatment Act, which was passed the House earlier this year and brings attention to the importance of not just focusing on the quantity of food, but also the quality of diets. This was echoed in the Administrator's speech just last week. Administrator Power announced additional funding for the Horn of Africa including \$90 million for long term development work, subject to Congressional notification.

I have been working in international development for over 30 years and in that time I have had the opportunity to work with dedicated USAID colleagues around the world in addressing some of the world's most pressing challenges. For today, the most important point I can emphasize is that investment in combating the root causes of food insecurity and malnutrition is the only way to prevent multi-billion dollar cyclical demands for humanitarian and direct food assistance. These investments are also crucial to mitigating the impacts of Russia's further invasion of Ukraine and releasing food insecure nations from their dependence on Russian fertilizer.

While we are living in unprecedented times, the seeds of the current food security crisis have been growing for the last half decade. Before the pandemic, the world was already facing rising food insecurity and hunger stemming from increased conflict and extreme weather exacerbated by climate change. Covid-19 accelerated this trend. At a global level, between 2019 and 2021 there was a 25 percent increase in the number of chronically hungry people and a 40 percent increase in the number of people in need of emergency food assistance. Now, the situation has been further exacerbated by Russia's further invasion of Ukraine. The war in

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Ukraine has contributed to dramatic increases in extreme humanitarian needs, but also increases in global food, fuel, and fertilizer prices. The impact of rising prices immediately changes household budgets - for example high food prices make it more difficult for parents and caregivers to feed their families, but rising fuel and fertilizer prices also alters agricultural production and limits dietary diversity.

While much attention has been focused on food prices, we are also particularly concerned about the high prices for fertilizer and fuel. An analysis by the International Food Policy Research Institute suggests that 74 percent of the expected increase in poverty and 63 percent of the expected increase in hunger will be due to high fuel and fertilizer costs. In addition, even if prices come down over the next year, farmers are already reducing fertilizer usage. Using half the amount of fertilizer means halving harvests. We, therefore, expect impacts from the greatly reduced production could reverberate through 2023 and perhaps into 2024.

In 2007/08, the world was hit with a food, fertilizer and fuel price crisis which looked similar to the current situation. That crisis contributed to political instability across a number of regions, including the Middle East. However, an important difference between now and 2008 is that we have Feed the Future. In fact, Feed the Future was created in the wake of that crisis and has been reauthorized on a bipartisan basis twice under different Administrations. Feed the Future is led by USAID which coordinates with 12 other agencies, including US Department of State and US Department of Agriculture, to leverage the best expertise of the US government to address hunger, poverty, and malnutrition. While Feed the Future cannot solve this crisis alone, it gives us an expanded set of tools in the toolbox to address these types of challenges. We do this by focusing on countries where our analysis shows both a great need for investment and the opportunity to stimulate local economies through agricultural growth which we know is the most impactful means of reducing extreme poverty and food insecurity. Feed the Future has three core areas of investment: agriculture - to develop robust food systems and combat hunger; resilience - to lessen recovery time and mitigate the consequences of unpredicted shocks; and nutrition - to build healthy bodies so communities can ensure their children avoid life-threatening specter of malnutrition and the lifetime impacts of stunting on mental and physical health.

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We know these methods work, because we have measured the success. During the COVID pandemic analysis from the World Bank showed that households in our areas of focus fared better than households in other parts of the country. For example, in Uganda, households in the Feed the Future Zones of Influence maintained comparatively steady access to food during the pandemic. Within the Zones, household food security decreased by only 7 percent. In comparison, food security outside the Zones of Influence decreased by 15 percent. I have seen these results myself. On one of my trips to the field, I met with a farmer in northeastern Kenya who showed me how much US generosity, through Feed the Future, had transformed her life. Like her ancestors before her, she grew up a herder, but increased droughts caused significant loss of livestock and hardship, making it difficult to feed and educate her children. With support from Feed the Future, she introduced irrigated farming and poultry rearing. Her plot was an oasis of green in an otherwise sparse landscape and she and her family were thriving from a healthier diet and income from the produce and poultry. Her children were going to school and she became a model for change in her community. Her story gives hope that it is possible to adapt and diversify to withstand shocks and become more resilient.

In addition, Feed the Future generates benefits which we can see back home. As supply chains extend and globalization brings communities closer, pests and disease are able to quickly travel between nations and continents. Feed the Future currently supports 20 Feed the Future Innovation Labs led by 13 U.S. universities who partner with 70 other U.S. colleges and universities in 40 states, and over 130 institutions of higher learning in 36 countries. These collaborations mean we can better prepare and defend against a variety of challenges from water shortages to pests and diseases both at home and abroad. For example, the Livestock Systems Innovation Lab, led by the University of Florida, collaborated with Texas A&M University's Small-Scale Irrigation Innovation Lab to better understand the production, environmental impacts and socio-economic impacts of livestock feed and irrigated forages. The Labs updated a modeling tool, the Irrigation Decision Support System (IDSS) which was created by USAID in the 1990s, to include groundwater, climate change assessments, and crop insurance data. The IDSS which Texas A&M University researchers used in Ethiopia, Ghana and Tanzania is now

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being used in the U.S. by USDA and EPA. USDA and EPA use the IDSS models' outputs to strengthen state and national water planning assessments so local and state governments can better understand their water supply and demand.

While my colleagues in the Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance are managing the immediate food needs caused by Putin's unjust further invasion of Ukraine, in RFS we are addressing root causes of food insecurity to bolster the resilience of people and systems to withstand current shocks. This includes the immediate fertilizer needs for farmers to ensure high production not just for this harvest, but also the next. We are focusing on three major areas to make the most of Feed the Future's resources and expertise. This includes: mitigating the global fertilizer shortage; increasing investments in agricultural capacity and resilience; and cushioning the macroeconomic shock and impact on the world's poor. During Administrator Power's recent travels to Zambia, she saw how Feed the Future is helping commercial and agricultural enterprises of all sizes meet national and regional demand through technical assistance and training, particularly targeting women farmers. Crops that can be grown without fertilizer are critically important for upcoming growing seasons since fertilizer prices have risen so much. USAID, through Feed the Future, is supporting companies like Good Nature Agro to reach smallholder farmers with high quality legume seeds that do not require fertilizer. Legumes also help families get much needed nutrients and help support malnutrition prevention. The company also provides farmer training and connections to premium markets that garners a higher price for their crops. These examples showcase why continued investment in Feed the Future is so important. In recognition of this fact, at the June G7 Leaders' Summit, the President announced the expansion of Feed the Future from targeting 12 to 20 countries. Country exposure to high food, fuel and fertilizer prices was one key indicator used to identify these new focus countries. USAID is also supporting food security in the Caribbean through the Caribbean Zero Hunger Plan with \$28 million in supplemental funds, subject to Congressional notification. The U.S. Government is working closely with the co-chairs of the food security action committee to develop an action plan.

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Thank you again for your continued support and investment in global food security and nutrition issues. I look forward to answering your questions.