


2018

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### Recommended Citation

Adkins, Michael (2018) "The Global Food Security Act: America's Strategic Approach to Combating World Hunger," *Journal of Food Law & Policy*: Vol. 14 : No. 2 , Article 4.

Available at: <https://scholarworks.uark.edu/jflp/vol14/iss2/4>

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—Journal of—  
FOOD & LAW  
—POLICY—

Volume Fourteen

Number Two

Fall 2018

THE GLOBAL FOOD SECURITY ACT:  
AMERICA'S STRATEGIC APPROACH TO  
COMBATING WORLD HUNGER

*Michael Adkins*

# The Global Food Security Act: America's Strategic Approach to Combatting World Hunger

Michael Adkins<sup>1</sup>

## I. Introduction

The world's farms currently produce enough calories to adequately feed everyone on the planet.<sup>2</sup> From the 1960s through 2008, per capita food availability worldwide has risen from 2220 kilocalories per person per day to 2790.<sup>3</sup> Specifically, developing countries have recorded a rise in available kilocalories per person per day, from 1850 to 2640.<sup>4</sup> Yet, despite overall availability, around 815 million people still suffer from hunger or some form of malnutrition.<sup>5</sup> Approximately one in ten people are undernourished.<sup>6</sup>

Despite this grim reality there is room for hope. The global trend is moving in the right direction.<sup>7</sup> Between 1990 and 2015, the "prevalence of undernourished people in developing countries declined from 23.3 to 12.9 percent."<sup>8</sup> For the first time in history the end

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<sup>1</sup> The author would like to thank his wife, daughter, and the rest of his family for their unyielding love and support. He would also like to thank his advisor, Professor Christopher Kelley, for his guidance. Finally, he would like to thank the Journal of Food Law and Policy's Editorial Board and Staff Editors for all their hard work and suggestions. All errors are the authors and the authors alone. Michael Adkins is a JD candidate, with an expected graduation of May 2019.

<sup>2</sup> *World Hunger, Poverty Facts, Statistics 2016 – World Hunger News*, HUNGER NOTES, <http://www.worldhunger.org/2015-world-hunger-and-poverty-facts-and-statistics/> (last visited Dec. 12, 2018).

<sup>3</sup> *Id.*

<sup>4</sup> *Id.*

<sup>5</sup> FOOD AND AGRIC. ORG. OF THE UNITED NATIONS ET AL., *THE STATE OF FOOD SECURITY AND NUTRITION IN THE WORLD* vi (2017), <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i7695e.pdf> [hereinafter *THE STATE OF FOOD SECURITY AND NUTRITION 2017*].

<sup>6</sup> See UNITED STATES AGENCY FOR INT'L DEV., U.S. GOV'T GLOBAL FOOD SECURITY STRATEGY FY 2017-2021 2 (2016), <https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1867/USG-Global-Food-Security-Strategy-2016.pdf> (stating that "nearly 800 million people around the world are chronically undernourished").

<sup>7</sup> See generally SHARAD TANDON ET AL., *PROGRESS AND CHALLENGES IN GLOBAL FOOD SECURITY*, UNITED STATES DEP'T OF AGRIC. (2017), <http://ageconsearch.umn.edu/record/262131/files/eib-175.pdf?subformat=pdfa> (finding that "[g]lobal food security has improved over the past 15 years, [though] challenges and opportunities remain.").

<sup>8</sup> *Id.* at 4.

of hunger is within reach.<sup>9</sup> But while “the world is [now] closer than ever before to ending global hunger,” United States (U.S.) policymakers still face significant challenges.<sup>10</sup> “Urbanization, gender inequality, [instability,] conflict, the effects of climate change,” and the inevitable rise in global population are all factors that must be addressed for any decline in world hunger to be sustainable.<sup>11</sup> Over the last two de-cades, great progress has been made in global food security.<sup>12</sup> In 2016, however, the number of global undernourished increased.<sup>13</sup> While it is currently difficult to determine whether the downward trend is actually reversing, many challenges clearly lie ahead in the fight for food security.<sup>14</sup>

On July 20, 2016, President Barack Obama signed the *Global Food Security Act* of 2016 (the Act) into law.<sup>15</sup> The Act authorized a “comprehensive strategic approach for United States (U.S.) foreign assistance to developing [nations.]”<sup>16</sup> It was enacted to “reduce global poverty and hunger, achieve food and nutrition security, [and] promote inclusive, sustainable, agricultural-led economic growth...”<sup>17</sup> It calls for a “whole-of-government”<sup>18</sup> strategy, a modern approach that integrates monitoring, evaluation, and learning aimed at strengthening the capacity of all global participants throughout the food and agricultural food system.<sup>19</sup> Humanitarianism, however, was not the sole motivation behind the Act’s passage; it was also enacted for national security purposes.<sup>20</sup> Expanded strategic engagement in countries rife with food insecurity “will improve [our] ability to anticipate and react to upheaval in regions crucial to U.S. national security.”<sup>21</sup> Greater access and

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<sup>9</sup> UNITED STATES AGENCY FOR INT’L DEV., *supra* note 6, at 1.

<sup>10</sup> *Id.* at 3.

<sup>11</sup> *Id.*

<sup>12</sup> TANDON ET AL, *supra* note 7, at 4 .

<sup>13</sup> THE STATE OF FOOD SECURITY AND NUTRITION 2017, *supra* note 5, at 1.

<sup>14</sup> *Id.* at ii.

<sup>15</sup> Global Food Security Act of 2016, 22 U.S.C. § 9301 (2016); Anuj Krishnamurthy, *Feeding the Future? One Year After the Global Food Security Act*, NEWSECURITYBEAT (Aug. 10, 2017), <https://www.newsecuritybeat.org/2017/08/feeding-future-one-year-after/>.

<sup>16</sup> Global Food Security Act of 2016, Pub. L. No. 114-195, 130 Stat 675 (2016).

<sup>17</sup> Global Food Security Act of 2016, 22 U.S.C. § 9301 (2016).

<sup>18</sup> *Id.* § 9302(b)(1) (2016).

<sup>19</sup> UNITED STATES AGENCY FOR INT’L DEVELOPMENT, *supra* note 6, at iv.

<sup>20</sup> Global Food Security Act of 2016, 22 U.S.C. § 9301(2) (2016).

<sup>21</sup> CULLEN S. HENDRIX, WHEN HUNGER STRIKES: HOW FOOD SECURITY ABROAD

insight into the cultures and politics of these countries, at their most basic level, is a positive side effect to humanitarian relief.

Various key elements are identified as objectives to help facilitate a successful implementation. The first is evidence based investment targeting – strategically focusing on areas and approaches where the greatest potential for sustainable improvements exists.<sup>22</sup> The second is implementing the “comprehensive, multi-faceted whole-of-government approach rooted in lessons learned” and best evidence that reflects emerging global and technological trends.<sup>23</sup> Third is recognizing that the targeted countries must take the lead and be responsible for their own progress.<sup>24</sup> Fourth is “[partnering with diverse] development actors and groups” to improve the “reach, effectiveness, efficiency, and sustainability” of U.S. investments.<sup>25</sup> Fifth is “harnessing the power of science, technology, and innovation to dramatically improve” local capacity and agriculture system practices.<sup>26</sup> And sixth is enhanced pro-program sustainability so that eventually agricultural and developmental assistance to foreign nations is no longer necessary.<sup>27</sup> The Act is not a food aid bill; its scope, goals, and funding mechanisms are strategic. While in certain ways the Act expands upon existing U.S. commitments to provide acute humanitarian relief,<sup>28</sup> its main goal is to assist in sustainable, targeted country development.

At the World Food Congress in 1963, President John F. Kennedy articulated a vision to eliminate world hunger: “as members of the human race, we have the means, we have the capacity to eliminate hunger from the face of the earth in our lifetimes. We need only the will.”<sup>29</sup> Clearly, the goal he set forth has yet to materialize. Hunger, famine, drought, regional instability, and resource driven military

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MATTERS FOR NATIONAL SECURITY AT HOME 3 THE CHICAGO COUNCIL ON GLOBAL AFFAIRS (2016), [https://www.thechicagocouncil.org/sites/default/files/Report\\_When\\_Hunger\\_Strikes\\_1604.pdf](https://www.thechicagocouncil.org/sites/default/files/Report_When_Hunger_Strikes_1604.pdf).

<sup>22</sup> UNITED STATES AGENCY FOR INT’L DEV., *supra* note 6, at iii.

<sup>23</sup> *Id.* at iv.

<sup>24</sup> *Id.*

<sup>25</sup> *Id.*

<sup>26</sup> *Id.*

<sup>27</sup> UNITED STATES AGENCY FOR INT’L DEVELOPMENT, *supra* note 6, at iii.

<sup>28</sup> SHARAD TANDON ET AL., PROGRESS AND CHALLENGES IN GLOBAL FOOD SECURITY 3 (2017).

<sup>29</sup> John F. Kennedy, President, United States of America, Remarks at the Opening Session of the World Food Congress, (June 4, 1963) (quoted by Susan E. Rice, Nat’l Sec. Advisor, Exec. Office of the president, Remarks at the Chicago Council Global Food Security Conference (May 22, 2014)).

conflict remain pervasive in a world whose population is projected to reach 9 billion by 2050.<sup>30</sup> Many questions also remain on how humanity will respond and cope with climate change.<sup>31</sup> Yet, modern sophisticated technologies from diverse sectors, coupled with rapid modes of communication and data sharing, are all available now, and the Act mandates they be utilized in the fight against food insecurity.<sup>32</sup> Kennedy's words ring truer today than ever before in modern human history.<sup>33</sup>

## II. Historical Overview of the Act's Origins

For nearly six decades the U.S. has been a leader in the fight to end food insecurity.<sup>34</sup> In the process, it has been the source of “about half of global food aid, as well as provided bilateral and multilateral support for agricultural development and trade.”<sup>35</sup> Food aid programs of the 1950s were initially implemented as a means to “discharge food surpluses” while increasing the supply of food to the global poor.<sup>36</sup> While these programs were meant to provide assistance, “in reality [they] proved [at times] problematic for many aid recipient countries.”<sup>37</sup> For example, as the United States Agency for International Development's (USAID) Food for Peace program dumped surplus wheat into developing countries' markets, these countries' domestic food prices plummeted.<sup>38</sup> In turn, local farmers could no longer compete.<sup>39</sup> Dependence on U.S. wheat increased, and by 1986, seven out of ten of the leading importers of U.S. farm commodities were Food for Peace recipients.<sup>40</sup> Despite our efforts to alleviate global hunger,

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<sup>30</sup> CULLEN S. HENDRIX, THE CHICAGO COUNCIL ON GLOBAL AFFAIRS, WHEN HUNGER STRIKES: HOW FOOD SECURITY ABROAD MATTERS FOR NATIONAL SECURITY AT HOME (2016).

<sup>31</sup> *Responding to Climate Change*, NASA GLOB. CLIMATE CHANGE, <https://climate.nasa.gov/solutions/adaptation-mitigation/> (last visited Dec. 13, 2018).

<sup>32</sup> Feed the Future, The U.S. Government's GLOBAL Food Security Research Strategy 7 (2017), [https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1867/GFS\\_2017\\_Research\\_Strategy\\_508C.pdf](https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1867/GFS_2017_Research_Strategy_508C.pdf) [hereinafter Feed the Future 2017]

<sup>33</sup> See UNITED STATES AGENCY FOR INT'L DEV., *supra* note 6, at iii (discussing the ability to feed the world and imperativeness of doing so).

<sup>34</sup> SHARAD TANDON ET AL., *supra* note 7, at 1.

<sup>35</sup> *Id.* at *What Is the Issue?*.

<sup>36</sup> WILLIAM D. SCHANBACHER, THE POLITICS OF FOOD 32 (2010).

<sup>37</sup> *Id.* at 32–3.

<sup>38</sup> *Id.* at 33.

<sup>39</sup> *Id.*

<sup>40</sup> *Id.*

by 2000, the dawn of the new millennium, an estimated 900 million people still were afflicted by food insecurity.<sup>41</sup>

### A. Food Security

The definition of food security most frequently used today originates from the 1996 World Food Summit of the Food and Agriculture Organizations of the United Nations (FAO): “food security exists when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life.”<sup>42</sup> Most analysts define three primary attributes of food security.<sup>43</sup> Some analysts, however, add a fourth.<sup>44</sup> Availability is the first pillar and simply refers to the overall “supply” of food available, while the second pillar, access, refers to the “range of food choices open to people” based on their socioeconomic status.<sup>45</sup> The concept of utilization comprises the third pillar and “reflects whether individuals and households make good use of the food” they have access to.<sup>46</sup> The fourth pillar, stability, encompasses all three of the above and perhaps is the most elusive; it refers to how susceptible individuals and households are to “interruptions in availability, access or utilization.”<sup>47</sup> The Act has built in mechanisms to address all four of the food security pillars. However, it takes special aim at the fourth.<sup>48</sup>

### B. The 2008 Food Price Crisis and a Modern Approach to Food Security

In 2008, as food prices spiked as they had in the 1970s, the world experienced another food security crisis driven by market volatility.<sup>49</sup> The World Bank estimated that due to the 2008 crisis,

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<sup>41</sup> THE STATE OF FOOD SECURITY AND NUTRITION 2017, *supra* note 5, at 2.

<sup>42</sup> SHARAD TANDON ET AL., *supra* note 7, at 9.

<sup>43</sup> CHRISTOPHER B. BARRETT, FOOD SECURITY AND SOCIOPOLITICAL STABILITY 6 (Christopher B. Barrett ed., 1st ed. 2013).

<sup>44</sup> *Id.*

<sup>45</sup> *Id.*

<sup>46</sup> *Id.* at 7.

<sup>47</sup> *Id.*

<sup>48</sup> UNITED STATES AGENCY FOR INT’L DEV., *supra* note 6, at 72.

<sup>49</sup> Food and Agric. Org. of the United Nations, *High Food Prices: The Food Security Crisis of 2007-2008 and Recent Food Price Increases – Facts and Lessons*, FAO, [http://www.fao.org/fileadmin/user\\_upload/ISFP/High\\_food\\_prices.pdf](http://www.fao.org/fileadmin/user_upload/ISFP/High_food_prices.pdf) (last visited Dec. 13, 2018).

50 million people were thrust back into poverty.<sup>50</sup> Indeed, without an organized commitment, and due to the acute nature of the price increases, many actions taken in the wake of this crisis were transient, “[focusing] mainly on distribution of agricultural inputs” and not on a long-term goal of sustainability.<sup>51</sup> This distribution of resources without “training, or other associated technical assistance,” limited the effect of the resources and did not lead to sustainable solutions.<sup>52</sup> Sustainability is “particularly [elusive] when underlying structural and management problems are not addressed.”<sup>53</sup>

After the crisis of 2008, the U.S. increased focus on agricultural development by increased spending and the creation of the Bureau for Food Security within USAID.<sup>54</sup> But as a result of globalization, policy makers still wrestled with the “transition from the time when national food markets were more self-contained than the present global food system.”<sup>55</sup> By 2010, food security was a top priority,<sup>56</sup> and the Obama administration established Feed the Future, the U.S. government’s global hunger and food security initiative.<sup>57</sup> From the beginning, Feed the Future utilized a “whole of government” approach.<sup>58</sup> This framework would later be codified in the Act.<sup>59</sup>

On May 22, 2014, former National Security Advisor, Susan E. Rice, addressed the Chicago Council Global Food Security conference.<sup>60</sup> She spoke of the quantifiable successes of Feed the Future and suggested four areas of focus necessary for the “[achievement] of

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<sup>50</sup> *Id.* at 2.

<sup>51</sup> *Id.*

<sup>52</sup> *Id.*

<sup>53</sup> *Id.*

<sup>54</sup> Eric Munoz, *The Global Food Security Act is Pushing to the Finish Line*, OXFAM (APR. 15, 2016), <https://politicsofpoverty.oxfamamerica.org/2016/04/the-global-food-security-act-is-pushing-to-the-finish-line> /2016/04/the-global-food-security-act-is-pushing-to-the-finish-line.

<sup>55</sup> TIM JOSLING, *THE OXFORD HANDBOOK ON THE WORLD TRADE ORGANIZATION* 655 (AMRITA NARLIKAR ET AL. EDS., 2012).

<sup>56</sup> *Id.*; see FEED THE FUTURE, <https://www.feedthefuture.gov> (last visited Dec. 13, 2018) (evidencing the commitment and concern food security garnered in U.S. policy).

<sup>57</sup> Munoz, *supra* note 54.

<sup>58</sup> Karen Hansen-Kuhn, *Making U.S. Trade Policy Serve Global Food Security Goals*, 11 SUSTAINABLE DEV. L. & POL’Y 9, 9 (2011).

<sup>59</sup> FEED THE FUTURE 2017, *supra* note 32, at 6.

<sup>60</sup> Susan E. Rice, *Remarks by National Security Advisor Susan E. Rice at the Chicago Council Global Food Security Conference*, THE WHITE HOUSE (May 22, 2014), <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2014/05/22/remarks-national-security-advisor-susan-e-rice-chicago-council-global-fo>.



food security on a global scale” for modern times.<sup>61</sup> In fact, Feed the Future became a tremendous success and generated strong bipartisan support.<sup>62</sup> Ultimately, Rice’s suggestions were largely adopted and codified in the Act,<sup>63</sup> and the first comprehensive strategy to address global hunger was born.<sup>64</sup>

The Act easily passed both chambers of Congress and commits the U.S. to continued engagement in the fight to enhance global food security, reduce poverty, and improve nutrition.<sup>65</sup> Pursuant to the Act, USAID published the Global Food Security Strategy to focus on achieving these goals through “three interrelated and interdependent objectives: (1) Inclusive and sustainable agricultural-led economic growth . . . (2) strengthened resilience among people and systems . . . and (3) a well-nourished population.”<sup>66</sup>

However, as of 2017, the U.S. is “one of the few [nations] in the world that [still] oppose the idea of a human right to food.”<sup>67</sup> The right is not treated as a “formal enforceable obligation.”<sup>68</sup> Traditionally, the Bretton Woods institutions and the U.S. government “emphasiz[e] liberalization, deregulation, privatization, and the compression of domestic budgets.”<sup>69</sup> At the 2002 World Food Summit in Rome, the Bush administration’s final statement articulated America’s approach to food security as premised not on an international human right to food, but on “local governments having the primary responsibility to provide for their citizens.”<sup>70</sup> For purposes of retaining autonomy and flexibility the U.S. has consistently declined to participate in any “in-

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<sup>61</sup> *Id.*

<sup>62</sup> Liz Schrayner, *The Surprise Bipartisan Success Story of Congress: American Aid* TIME (Sept. 13, 2016), <http://time.com/4487397/bipartisan-success-congress/>.

<sup>63</sup> Compare Rice, *supra* note 60 (listing goals to achieve food security on a global scale), with Global Food Security Act of 2016, 22 U.S.C. § 9301 (2016) (listing strategies to achieve global food security).

<sup>64</sup> Anuj Krishnamurthy, *Feeding the Future? One Year After the Global Food Security Act*, NEWSECURITYBEAT (Aug. 10, 2017), <https://www.newsecuritybeat.org/2017/08/feeding-future-one-year-after/>.

<sup>65</sup> UNITED STATES AGENCY FOR INT’L DEV., *supra* note 6, at 7.

<sup>66</sup> *Id.* at iii.

<sup>67</sup> *The Human Right to Food and Dignity*, HUMAN RIGHT MAG., Vol. 37 (2010), [https://www.americanbar.org/publications/human\\_rights\\_magazine\\_home/human\\_rights\\_vol37\\_2010/winter2010/the\\_human\\_right\\_to\\_food\\_and\\_dignity.html](https://www.americanbar.org/publications/human_rights_magazine_home/human_rights_vol37_2010/winter2010/the_human_right_to_food_and_dignity.html).

<sup>68</sup> Human Rights Council 13th Session, United States Explanation of Position on the Right to Food (L.17) (Mar. 24, 2010), <https://www.state.gov/documents/organization/179236.pdf>.

<sup>69</sup> SCHANBACHER, *supra* note 36, at 31.

<sup>70</sup> *Id.*

ternationally binding agreement to provide food security for the rest of the world.”<sup>71</sup>

By broadly focusing on “partnership[s] with other governments, civil society, multilateral development institutions, research institutions, universities, and the private sector,” the Act largely adheres to this established ideological position; it does not depart from tradition.<sup>72</sup> What follows is a comment on the Act’s framework that aims to demonstrate how and why it should be embraced. Whether the Act can meet its objectives in the existing global order is dependent on a multitude of factors and well beyond the scope of this paper. One thing, however, is certain. The old way of largely providing emergency assistance alone was not working to address the fundamental causes of food insecurity, and in a rapidly changing world, a new approach to combating global hunger is needed.<sup>73</sup> This Act has great promise.

### III. Policy, Strategy, and the Whole-of-Government Approach

It is “in the national interest of the [U.S.]” to promote global food security.<sup>74</sup> Accordingly, as a matter of national security and foreign policy, the Act tasks the president with coordinating all relevant federal departments and agencies to implement the *Global Food Security Strategy* efficiently and effectively.<sup>75</sup> The relevant federal agencies are to provide “diverse, technical, programmatic, in-kind, and financial contributions” that must be coordinated.<sup>76</sup> The *strategy* proposed to accomplish this is by “[building] upon platforms and enhanced mechanisms at the global, regional, and country levels to leverage

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<sup>71</sup> *Id.* at 32.

<sup>72</sup> *See generally*, UNITED STATES AGENCY FOR INT’L DEV., *supra* note 6 (listing broad objectives without required obligations).

<sup>73</sup> *See generally* THE STATE OF FOOD SECURITY AND NUTRITION 2017, *supra* note 5 (outlining what is needed to increase global food security and nutrition).

<sup>74</sup> 22 U.S.C. § 9302(a) (2016).

<sup>75</sup> *Id.* at § 9302 (3)(b) (2016). *See id.* at § 9304(c)(1) (2016) (mandating that all relevant agencies submit to the appropriate congressional committees... an agency specific plan how to for implementing the Act).

<sup>76</sup> UNITED STATES AGENCY FOR INT’L DEV., *supra* note 6, at 38. *See* 22 U.S.C. § 9301(4)(7) (2016) (defining relevant federal departments and agencies as the “United States Agency for International Development, the Department of Agriculture, the Department of Commerce, the Department of State, the Department of the Treasury, the Millennium Challenge Corporation, the Overseas Private Investment Corporation, the Peace Corps, the Office of the United States Trade Representative, the United States African Development Foundation, and the United States Geological Survey . . .”).

technical expertise, data, and resources.”<sup>77</sup> Efficient coordination of each agency’s research investments are therefore critical to the successful implementation of this Act.<sup>78</sup> Necessarily, “research themes”<sup>79</sup> were identified to ensure all “stages of the food security [research and development] pipeline,” across all varying agencies and partner countries, are united toward the same ends.<sup>80</sup> In light of all the challenges standing in the way of food security, research and development will prove to be one of, if not the most, crucial components in the fight.<sup>81</sup>

Similarly, for flexibility and fiscal responsibility the *strategy* makes clear that “regular consultation and collaboration with key stakeholders [and pertinent] congressional committees” will take place, so as to “avoid duplication of [American] investments.”<sup>82</sup> In fact, accountability for results and transparency are central elements of the monitoring, evaluation, and learning approach the Act utilizes to track progress.<sup>83</sup> Built into the structure of the *Strategy* is the constant pursuit of the efficient and effective use of taxpayer dollars.<sup>84</sup>

#### IV. Interrelated and Interdependent Objectives of the Act

##### A. Inclusive and Sustainable Agricultural-led Economic Growth:

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<sup>77</sup> UNITED STATES AGENCY FOR INT’L DEV., *supra* note 6, at 38.

<sup>78</sup> See generally FEED THE FUTURE 2017, *supra* note 32 (discussing the need for cooperation and coordination in addressing global food insecurity).

<sup>79</sup> *Id.* at 7 (“I. Technologies and practices that advance the productivity frontier to drive income growth, improve diets and promote natural resource conservation; II. Technologies and practices that reduce, manage and mitigate risk to support resilient, prosperous, well-nourished individuals, households, and communities; and III. Improved knowledge on how to achieve human outcomes: generating evidence on how to sustainably and equitably improve economic opportunity, nutrition and resilience).

<sup>80</sup> *Id.*

<sup>81</sup> *Id.* at 9.

<sup>82</sup> UNITED STATES AGENCY FOR INT’L DEV., *supra* note 6, at 38. See 22 U.S.C. § 9303(5) (2016) (defining “key stakeholders” as “actors engaged in efforts to advance global food security programs and objectives, including relevant Federal departments and agencies; national and local governments; other bilateral donors; international and regional organizations; international, regional, and local financial institutions; international, regional, and local private voluntary, nongovernmental, faith-based, and civil society organizations; the private sector, including agribusinesses and relevant commodities groups; agricultural producers, including farmers organizations, cooperatives, small-scale producers, and women; and agricultural research and academic institutions, including land grant universities and extension services”).

<sup>83</sup> FEED THE FUTURE 2017, *supra* note 32, at 13.

<sup>84</sup> *Id.*

Agricultural led growth builds from the ground up and strives to ensure the “availability of food [while] generating income from production” for those at the greatest risk of food insecurity.<sup>85</sup> Agricultural led growth also aims to “[create] employment and [entrepreneurial] opportunities throughout the value chain.”<sup>86</sup> When there is broad, inclusive employment in the agriculture sector, especially for smallholder farms, local partners can decrease their reliance on inputs from development assistance programs.<sup>87</sup> Smallholder farms are those cultivated on two hectares or under.<sup>88</sup> Over half the people in poor countries who “[work in the] agriculture sector . . . live in smallholder households.”<sup>89</sup> In many instance these people are vulnerable to the climate and “markets . . . and rely substantially on self-provisioning.”<sup>90</sup> Sustainable output of smallholder agriculture is therefore vital for global food security.<sup>91</sup>

#### B. Strengthened Resilience Among People and Systems:

In underdeveloped regions, people caught in the cycle of poverty have more difficulty sustainably emerging from poverty when “shocks and stresses” to the environment and political landscape occur.<sup>92</sup> Increased resilience among these populations is therefore vital for sustainable food security.<sup>93</sup> But without reliable markets, civil institutions, or infrastructure to mitigate stressors or food shortages, the cycle of poverty and hunger will persist. Thus, strengthening the resiliency of people will necessarily involve investment in infrastructure.<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> UNITED STATES AGENCY FOR INT’L DEV., *supra* note 6, at 28.

<sup>86</sup> *Id.*

<sup>87</sup> *Id.* at 8.

<sup>88</sup> Rebecca Nelson & Richard Coe, *Transforming Research and Development Practice to Support Agroecological Intensification of Smallholder Farming*, 67 J. INT’L AFF. 107, 107 (2014).

<sup>89</sup> FOOD AND AGRIC. ORG. OF THE UNITED NATIONS, SMALLHOLDER AND FAMILY FARMER 1 (2012), [http://www.fao.org/fileadmin/templates/nr/sustainability\\_pathways/docs/Factsheet\\_SMALLHOLDERS.pdf](http://www.fao.org/fileadmin/templates/nr/sustainability_pathways/docs/Factsheet_SMALLHOLDERS.pdf) [hereinafter SMALLHOLDERS AND FAMILY FARMER].

<sup>90</sup> Nelson & Coe, *supra* note 88, at 108.

<sup>91</sup> *Id.*

<sup>92</sup> UNITED STATES AGENCY FOR INT’L DEV., *supra* note 6, at iii.

<sup>93</sup> *Id.* at 8.

<sup>94</sup> *Id.* at 14–15.

With strengthened infrastructure, nations will be able to increase production sustainably, thus mitigating risk and enhancing recovery from environmental and political stressors.<sup>95</sup> Despite inevitable “shocks and stresses,” improved infrastructure will strengthen resiliency and allow progress in the agricultural sector to take hold. Ultimately it will “[reduce] reliance upon emergency food assistance.”<sup>96</sup>

### C. A Well-nourished Population:

While adequate nutrition is important to men, women, and children of all ages, the Act focuses especially on women and children, from the time of the child’s conception until the child turns two.<sup>97</sup> Undernutrition during this vulnerable period can produce “lower levels of educational attainment” and limit lifetime productivity.<sup>98</sup> Further, women on average provide “43 percent of the agricultural labor force of developing countries.”<sup>99</sup> Women’s continued and increased participation is thus an essential ingredient for sustainability in production systems.<sup>100</sup> Improved sanitation and clean water is another factor address by the *Strategy*.<sup>101</sup> Ultimately, the *Strategy*’s objective is to “[increase] consumption of nutritious and safe” foods in healthy household and communities.<sup>102</sup>

## V. Key Elements Identified to Strengthen Ability to Achieve Objectives

### A. Targeting Investments

Since the release of the *Strategy*, the “first twelve Feed the Future” target countries were selected.<sup>103</sup> These countries were deemed to possess the “greatest potential [for] the sustainable [improvement of] food security” for their people.<sup>104</sup> The U.S. has chosen these countries as partners with the goal of “[harnessing] the

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<sup>95</sup> *Id.* at 8.

<sup>96</sup> FEED THE FUTURE 2017, *supra* note 32, at 9.

<sup>97</sup> UNITED STATES AGENCY FOR INT’L DEV., *supra* note 6, at iii.

<sup>98</sup> *Id.*

<sup>99</sup> SMALLHOLDER AND FAMILY FARMER, *supra* note 89, at 1.

<sup>100</sup> *Id.*

<sup>101</sup> UNITED STATES AGENCY FOR INT’L DEV., *supra* note 6, at 22.

<sup>102</sup> *Id.* at 10.

<sup>103</sup> FEED THE FUTURE 2017, *supra* note 32, at 7.

<sup>104</sup> UNITED STATES AGENCY FOR INT’L DEV., *supra* note 6, at iii.

power of agriculture to jumpstart their economies.”<sup>105</sup> The countries include: Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Ghana, Guatemala, Honduras, Kenya, Mali, Nepal, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, and Uganda.<sup>106</sup>

The criteria used to select target countries included: (1) the level of need; (2) potential for agricultural-led growth; (3) opportunities for [local] partnership; (4) opportunities for regional economic integration; (5) U.S. Government resource availability; and (6) the targeted government’s commitment to food security investment and policy reform.<sup>107</sup> While specific beneficiaries will be targeted for short term and medium term impact, the overall strategy is to improve in-stitutions, markets, choices, and opportunities at a systemic level.<sup>108</sup> A wide variety of actors from the public sector, private sector, and civil society will be engaged.<sup>109</sup>

### B. Developing Countries Must Take the Lead

The Act is structured to respond to the inherent diversity of farming practices and needs of the target countries.<sup>110</sup> The *Strategy* thus requires target countries to “own and be empowered to lead and guide efforts to drive [their own] progress.”<sup>111</sup> This model is designed to address one of the significant challenges of global food security, namely, that there “is no ‘one size fits all’” approach to improving conditions, markets, and yields for farmers.<sup>112</sup> As reflected in the selection criteria, support will be lent to those countries whose national and local governments actively coordinate and develop institutional capabilities and accountability mechanisms that provide strong

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<sup>105</sup> Sasha Jenkins, *US Takes Step Forward in Fight Against Global Hunger*, GLOBAL CITIZEN (AUG. 31, 2017), <https://www.globalcitizen.org/en/content/us-fights-against-global-hunger/>.

<sup>106</sup> FEED THE FUTURE 2017, *supra* note 32, at 7.

<sup>107</sup> UNITED STATES AGENCY FOR INT’L DEV., *supra* note 6, at 36.

<sup>108</sup> *Id.* at 37.

<sup>109</sup> *Id.*

<sup>110</sup> See Global Food Security Act of 2016, 22 U.S.C. § 9302 (2016) (stating the policy objective of “promoting global food security” and listing the various programs, activities, and initiatives that reinforce national food security investment plans).

<sup>111</sup> UNITED STATES AGENCY FOR INT’L DEV., *supra* note 6, at 41.

<sup>112</sup> JEFFEREY D. SACHS, *THE AGE OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT* 327 (2015) (“Farmers differ incredibly in what they grow; how they grow it; and the challenges of climate, soil, water, topography, pests, biodiversity, and transport costs they face. These variations in turn have an enormous farm systems and strategies.”).

working relationships with both the private sector and civil society.<sup>113</sup> Active coordination between the private and public sectors, coupled with direct U.S. involvement, will yield localized (particularized) solutions tailored to local conditions leading to food insecurity in the target countries. The aggregate of insights into local solutions to food insecurity are a step developing “solutions for a global sustainable food supply.”<sup>114</sup>

### C. Local Capacity and Partnerships

Of course, there are risks and vulnerabilities inherent in work-ing with local populations; they may include: (1) weak systems and internal controls; (2) limited capacity; and (3) competing [political, social, or cultural] interests.<sup>115</sup> Ineffective, corrupt, or toxic localized politics may also stifLe technological development and productiv-ity.<sup>116</sup> Yet, partnerships with key stakeholders will allow the U.S.

to “leverage the required skill, expertise, technologies, assets, and resources to improve our effectiveness, efficiency, and sustainability of development efforts.”<sup>117</sup> The goal is to achieve a diverse, transparent, inclusively broad range of partners<sup>118</sup> that not only include those in the public and private sectors, but also those in research centers, educa-tional organizations,<sup>119</sup> and multilateral development institutions.<sup>120</sup>

## VI. Science, Technology, Innovation, and the Sustainability of Programs

At the heart of the Act’s objective is to achieve inclusive, sustainable growth that builds resiliency among the people of

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<sup>113</sup> UNITED STATES AGENCY FOR INT’L DEV., *supra* note 6, at 41.

<sup>114</sup> SACHS, *supra* note 112, at 327–28.

<sup>115</sup> UNITED STATES AGENCY FOR INT’L DEV., *supra* note 6, at 42.

<sup>116</sup> *See id.* at 111 (stating that “corruption--the abuse of entrusted authority for private gain-- remains a tremendous obstacle to political, social, and economic development” and that “corruption affects food security by widening the gap between rich and poor, deterring investment, and distorting markets”).

<sup>117</sup> UNITED STATES AGENCY FOR INT’L DEV., *supra* note 6, at 43.

<sup>118</sup> *See id.*

<sup>119</sup> *Id.* at 44.

<sup>120</sup> *Id.*

<sup>121</sup> *Id.* at iii.

participating nations – for the purpose of maintaining a well-nourished population.<sup>121</sup> The Strategy breaks this objective into three distinct categories, yet they can be read as one, with *sustainability* being the operative word.<sup>122</sup> As the *Strategy* frames it, sustainability requires that “all development investments should catalyze the economic, political, and social processes within those countries [to] yield ever-improving lives for their citizens.”<sup>123</sup>

Proponents of the Act understand that sustained investments in science and technology are critical for development and a sustainable reduction in global food insecurity.<sup>124</sup> Scientific advancement and technological innovation are therefore mandated by the Act;<sup>125</sup> accordingly, relevant U.S. agencies have identified three overarching research themes for each agency to pursue in the context of their own expertise.<sup>126</sup> This coordinated effort aims to ensure that diverse agency actions remain in constant pursuit of the Act’s objectives, no matter who, what, when, or where the relevant agency interacts with the partner country’s agricultural sector.<sup>127</sup> While theme I and II deal with “scalable products and practice that [advance productivity, nutrition, and risk mitigation,]” theme III takes a more anthropological approach and seeks to understand the people of the target countries in a cultural context.<sup>128</sup>

Research under theme III is arguably the most important. It guides how and where research, program implementation, and technology are to be deployed for the most equitable distribution of food security advancements.<sup>129</sup> How people benefit is the ultimate test of the Act’s merit: but without understanding the specific needs of the people in target countries or how they interact with their political, cultural, ecological, or global environments - in stable and unstable times - food security will likely prove illusive.<sup>130</sup> Theme III, through its focus on “human behavior,” is designed to address these concerns.<sup>131</sup> Theme I is focused on the micro level and works to increase crop yields, production efficiency, quality of nutrition, and

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<sup>122</sup> *See id.*

<sup>123</sup> *Id.* at 42.

<sup>124</sup> *Id.* 46.

<sup>125</sup> FEED THE FUTURE 2017, *supra* note 32, at 12; *See* Global Food Security Act of 2016, 22 U.S.C. § 9302(a)(7) (2016).

<sup>126</sup> FEED THE FUTURE 2017, *supra* note 32, at 7.

<sup>127</sup> *Id.*

<sup>128</sup> *Id.*

<sup>129</sup> *Id.* at 22.

<sup>130</sup> *Id.* at 22–24.

<sup>131</sup> *Id.*



the value of agricultural products across the farm to market supply chain.<sup>132</sup> Theme II is concerned with safety, the promotion of resilience, and the mitigation of risk.<sup>133</sup> Many partners throughout the U.S. government, private sector, universities, colleges, civil society, and partner countries are tasked with implementing the research strategy.<sup>134</sup>

In sum, the Act's pervasive focus on perfected sustainability is a departure from food aid programs of the past, has refined and built upon current approaches to global food security and nutrition, and has set U.S. policy with respect to agricultural assistance on a proactive rather than reactive course.<sup>135</sup> Further, the research themes provide for flexible innovation over time, are aimed at culturally sensitive advancement, and cover all pillars upon which food security rests. They aim to enhance the interplay between all the elements mentioned above with the overarching goal of sustainability.<sup>136</sup>

## VI. Can the World Expect a Future Free from Hunger?

### A. Climate Change in a Changing World:

Climate change is an artificially controversial topic. There is broad consensus among the scientific community that the climate is in fact changing, temperatures are in fact rising, and that the activities of man are very likely a cause of its acceleration.<sup>137</sup> Therefore, as people struggle with climate change, the continued focus on women and smallholder farms in the fight against global hunger is essential: "well managed smallholder systems invest in building soil biomass and vegetative cover [to improve] water filtration in case of floods, and moisture retention" in the event of drought.<sup>138</sup> Smallholder farms also

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<sup>132</sup> *Id.* 17–19.

<sup>133</sup> FEED THE FUTURE 2017, *supra* note 32, at 17–19.

<sup>134</sup> See 22 U.S.C. § 9302(a)(3), (7), (8) (describing policy objectives behind the Global Food Security Act); FEED THE FUTURE 2017, *supra* note 32, at 20.

<sup>135</sup> See generally UNITED STATES AGENCY FOR INT'L DEV., *supra* note 6, at 46 (describing methods that provide infrastructure, knowledge, and research for continuing sustainability).

<sup>136</sup> *Id.* at 10 fig. 1.

<sup>137</sup> See generally U.S. GLOBAL CHANGE RESEARCH PROGRAM, CLIMATE SCIENCE SPECIAL REPORT: FOURTH NATIONAL CLIMATE ASSESSMENT (NCA4) VOLUME I (2017), <https://science2017.globalchange.gov> (finding incredibly strong evidence supporting the existence of climate change the role of human activity in its rapid acceleration).

<sup>138</sup> SMALLHOLDER AND FAMILY FARMER, *supra* note 89, at 2.

have less dependence on fossil fuels and lower energy requirements.<sup>139</sup> Further, traditional smallholder practices may also reduce emission and enhance soil carbon sequestration.<sup>140</sup> The uncertainty of climate change is all the more reason a flexible, sustained, whole-of-government approach is needed. “Continuous learning, adaptation, and communication through monitoring and evaluation” is required to comprehend and respond to the many changing and unknown variables our researchers and policymakers will face.<sup>141</sup>

### B. Conflict, Instability, and the Global Economy:

With an increased global population comes increased competition for resources and thus the potential for continued conflict. It is estimated by 2050, 9 billion people will inhabit this planet.<sup>142</sup> In 2016, with a global population of only 7.5 billion,<sup>143</sup> there were 19 countries marred by violence, civil war, or natural disaster.<sup>144</sup> It is no surprise that countries in the grips of conflict or natural calamity are more susceptible to persistent food insecurity.<sup>145</sup> In fact, over half of the world’s “chronically undernourished” reside in countries in conflict.<sup>146</sup> And from those countries, an estimated 100 million face “crisis-level food insecurity.”<sup>147</sup> While traditional, interstate warfare has decreased, the prevalence of intrastate conflict has risen.<sup>148</sup> But in the age of globalization many of these internal conflicts are of regional and global concern and have implications well beyond their borders.<sup>149</sup>

Furthermore, certain aspects of the global economy are “widely associated with ongoing global food insecurity.”<sup>150</sup> For example, economic policies that traditionally develop in wealthy, industrialized

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<sup>139</sup> *Id.*

<sup>140</sup> *Id.*

<sup>141</sup> FEED THE FUTURE 2017, *supra* note 32, at 19 (discussing methods for increasing adaptation and recovery from shocks and stress).

<sup>142</sup> *See, e.g.*, TANDON ET AL., *supra* note 7, at iii.

<sup>143</sup> *E.g.*, U. S. Census Bureau, U.S. AND WORLD POPULATION CLOCK, (Mar. 13, 2018) <https://www.census.gov/popclock/>.

<sup>144</sup> THE STATE OF FOOD SECURITY AND NUTRITION 2017, *supra* note 5, at 30.

<sup>145</sup> *Id.* at 35.

<sup>146</sup> *See id.* (calculating the figure at 489 million out of a total of 815 million people). <sup>147</sup> THE STATE OF FOOD SECURITY AND NUTRITION 2017, *supra* note 5, at 30.

<sup>148</sup> *Id.* at 33.

<sup>149</sup> *Id.*

<sup>150</sup> Jennifer Clapp, *World Hunger and the Global Economy: Strong Linkages, Weak Action*, 67 J. INT’L AFF. 1, 2 (2014).

countries often contribute to “higher... more volatile food prices and uneven distribution of food and agricultural assets.”<sup>151</sup> Higher food prices and the ensuing volatility can thus lead to, or exacerbate, political instability.<sup>152</sup> Price volatility is especially tough on rural communities because when prices are unstable, smallholder farmers cannot compete. They can lose their incentive to produce and lose their land.<sup>153</sup> While no specific trade policies are provided in the Act, research theme III is designed to provide solutions to these complex political, economic issues.<sup>154</sup> The Act, by using the whole-of-government approach, works to address the problems caused by global conflict and unstable markets.<sup>155</sup> It does so by employing agencies whose personnel are in direct, on the ground contact with the people in the world’s poorest countries where they can provide the change and support from the bottom up.<sup>156</sup>

### C. Potential Shortcomings of the Act:

The Feed the Future Report states that no “legal or regulatory impediments to implementation of the [*strategy*]” were identified.<sup>157</sup> However, as stated above, regions in conflict will remain outside of the Act’s reach due to the degree of cooperation and stability within a target country required by the Act.

## VII. Progress and State of the Act Since Passage

What began in 2009 as the Feed the Future initiative, by 2015 had “helped [millions of] farmers gain access to new tools and technologies.”<sup>158</sup> The initiative had therefore helped millions of “farmers and producers [improve] their crop yields.”<sup>159</sup> Millions of children were also affected by the implementation of nutrition programs.<sup>160</sup> In

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<sup>151</sup> *Id.*

<sup>152</sup> HENDRIX, *supra* note 21, at 3.

<sup>153</sup> Karen Hausen-Kuhn, *Making Trade Policy Serve Global Food Security Goals*, 11 SUSTAINABLE DEV. L. & POL’Y 9, 10-11 (2011).

<sup>154</sup> FEED THE FUTURE 2017, *supra* note 32, at 22-24.

<sup>155</sup> UNITED STATES AGENCY FOR INT’L DEV., *supra* note 6, at 28.

<sup>156</sup> *See id.* at 45.

<sup>157</sup> FEED THE FUTURE 2017, *supra* note 32, at 24.

<sup>158</sup> Annika Reno, *How Obama’s Feed the Future Initiative Helped Millions in 2015*, GLOBAL CITIZEN (Aug. 6, 2016) <https://www.globalcitizen.org/en/content/obamas-feed-the-future-initiative-impacts-millions/>.

<sup>159</sup> Jenkins, *supra* note 105.

<sup>160</sup> *Id.*

2016 alone, Feed the Future reached “nearly eleven million small-scale food producers.”<sup>161</sup> In partnership with USAID it “trained more than 3.7 million people in child health and nutrition; it also trained thousands of local health facilities on how to effectively cope with malnutrition.”<sup>162</sup> By July 19, 2017, approximately one year after the Act’s passage,<sup>163</sup> 118 bipartisan lawmakers and advocates gathered in Washington, D.C., to “celebrate [its] success.”<sup>164</sup> Those congregated “expressed continued dedication to food security initiatives like those implemented under the Act.”<sup>165</sup> Food security was a “great unifier.”<sup>166</sup>

The Act of 2016 was “one of the few bipartisan pieces of legislation to emerge in recent years.”<sup>167</sup> Initially, under the Trump administration, there was a markedly divergent direction in policy priorities.<sup>168</sup> For example, in early November of 2017, the Undersecretary of International Affairs at the Treasury Department announced that “the U.S. is not expecting to make any future contributions to the Global Agriculture and Food Security Program (GAFSP),” a multilateral development institution implicated in the Act.<sup>169</sup> This program, administered by the World Bank, “channels member pledges of assistance to developing countries agriculture projects.”<sup>170</sup>

However, in 2018, again with broad bipartisan support, the Act was reauthorized.<sup>171</sup> But only time will tell if the Act is implemented as Congress intended, or if the Act survives another reautho-

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<sup>161</sup> FEED THE FUTURE 2017, *supra* note 32, at 3.

<sup>162</sup> *Id.*

<sup>163</sup> Anuj Krishnamurthy, *supra* note 15.

<sup>164</sup> See Avery Friedman, *Celebrating a Year of Success for the Global Food Security Act*, GLOBAL CITIZEN (July 20, 2017), <https://www.globalcitizen.org/en/content/gfsa-year-food-security-event/>.

<sup>165</sup> *Id.*

<sup>166</sup> Michael J. Puma & Peter B. de Menocal, *Trump’s Unifying Opportunity: Food Security*, COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY CENTER FOR CLIMATE AND LIFE (Mar. 2, 2017), <http://climateandlife.columbia.edu/2017/03/02/trumps-unifying-opportunity-food-security/>.

<sup>167</sup> *Id.*

<sup>168</sup> *See id.*

<sup>169</sup> Bethany Allen-Ebrahimian, *Treasury Takes Aim at Global Food Security Program*, FOREIGN POLICY (Nov. 10, 2017), <http://foreignpolicy.com/2017/11/10/treasury-takes-aim-at-global-food-security-program-obama-agriculture-farmers/>.

<sup>170</sup> Jennifer Clapp, *supra* note 150.

<sup>171</sup> *Global Food Security Reauthorization Act Confirms US Commitment to Food Security*, THE CHICAGO COUNCIL ON GLOBAL AFFAIRS (Oct. 12, 2018), <https://www.thechicagocouncil.org/press-release/global-food-security-reauthorization-act-confirms-us-commitment-food-security>.

ization. Regardless, the Act's modern approach to food security is a model for how best to unify and apply the strengths of our public and private sector alike to a problem that without strong, dedicated, global leadership, will unquestionably remain.

### VIII. Conclusion

Sustenance in the form of food and water is behind only oxygen as the most fundamental ingredients essential for human existence.<sup>172</sup> Without it, there is little hope. Not only is the cycle of poverty and malnourishment devastating to those who experience it directly, food insecurity leads to instability in the broader world. It lays fertile ground for extremism and conflict, directly affecting national security. Continued adherence to this Act and the continued focus on improving the lives of the most vulnerable will not only produce a positive return on our investments, but it is the right thing to do. In the long run its approach and built in mechanisms for flexibility allow for continued learning and adaptation to the changing world from the ground up.<sup>173</sup>

The Act is the American government's current approach to combating food insecurity. One thing, however, is certain: our leaders must maintain the will to implement the Act as designed. It must not be starved of funding. Despite its shortcomings and limitations, the Act is an example of American foreign policy at its best. Taking into account our global reach, tools, and the technologies at our command, we have the power to make a difference in one of the most fundamental, visceral issues of our time. Food insecurity will assuredly not dissolve overnight, but through sustained engagement with the developing world, we can work pragmatically to help break the cycle that leads to perpetual poverty, malnourishment, and starvation. It would be unwise for our leadership to squander such strong bipartisan support, agreement, and momentum. It would be an abdication of global leadership on an issue we are uniquely equipped to solve. This strategy is not zero sum. For if one family starves, or one child dies, whether in our own neighborhood or a world and culture away, we all suffer. One way or another, whether it be refugees fleeing famine, extremists sewing instability in vulnerable lands, volatile commodity

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<sup>172</sup> See *Five Basic Needs to Survive and Thrive*, SANTEVIA (June 16, 2016), <https://www.santevia.com/blog/5-basic-needs-to-survive-and-thrive/>.

<sup>173</sup> UNITED STATES AGENCY FOR INT'L DEV., *supra* note 6, at 6.

prices, or personal feelings of guilt, sadness, empathy, or powerlessness – chronic global hunger touches us all.