

**Statement by Dan Glickman
Secretary of Agriculture
Before the Senate Committee on Agriculture,
Nutrition and Forestry
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Mr. Chairman, members of the Committee, it is a pleasure to appear before you to review President Clinton's proposal for U.S. participation in a global food for education initiative.

Just last week, I was honored to be the first U.S. Secretary of Agriculture to address the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations. I went there because I believe that the United States must be a leader in international development efforts.

This philosophy has been at the heart of American foreign policy for over 50 years -- from the Marshall Plan, to our early food aid efforts under Public Law 480. It continues today, with our recent assistance efforts in North Korea, Indonesia, Ethiopia, Eritrea, and Kenya--areas devastated by drought and food shortages.

Food is the most basic of human essentials. It is the first step toward empowerment and self-reliance. And all of us, working together, need to be innovative in finding ways to get food to those who need it to combat hunger,

thereby promoting sustainable and self-reliant economic and social development in the areas that receive donations.

In the United States, one of the ways we have attacked hunger is through early intervention, by feeding young children prior to and when they enter school. As many of you know, the School Meals program has been one of the greatest government successes of the 20th century. It serves about 27 million children a day, giving them the sustenance they need for alert and fertile minds that are ready for learning. It serves as a model for foreign governments to follow in developing their nutrition assistance programs, and, in fact, USDA's Food and Nutrition Service has provided technical assistance in the development of such programs in other countries.

In an attempt to address this issue on a global scale and build on the success of our current domestic and international food assistance programs, President Clinton asked me to work with George McGovern, U.S. Ambassador to the U.N. Food Agencies in Rome; Senator Bob Dole; Congressman Jim McGovern; and others, including the Agency for International Development and the United Nations' global food aid agency, the World Food Program (WFP), on an idea that would apply the school meals concept internationally. Over 120 million children worldwide are not enrolled in school, and tens of millions more drop out before

achieving basic literacy. Many of these children are among the estimated 250 million who work. A global school meals and pre-school nutrition program would help countries encourage more of their young people to enroll and stay in school and reduce the incidence of child labor. It has the potential to raise academic performance and increase literacy rates, which can help their economies grow faster and their people fulfill their potential.

School meals encourage parents to keep their children in school. For example, when a school feeding program in the Dominican Republic was temporarily suspended, 25 percent of the children dropped out of school. Expanding literacy by getting more children in school can also increase the effectiveness of efforts to prevent and treat HIV/AIDS and improve maternal and child health more broadly.

Many private voluntary organizations (PVOs) have had success with school meals programs. For example, Catholic Relief Services (CRS) has had extensive experience with both school meals and food-assisted education programs, and has learned that it is critical to accompany food aid with other inputs and interventions to improve the overall quality of education. A CRS project in Ghana, for example, is aimed at increasing educational opportunities for girls. Using take-home rations and an information campaign that stresses the importance of educating girls, CRS

has seen the number of girls enrolled in school jump by 88 percent, and their attendance rise by 50 percent. In other words, not only are more girls starting school, they also are sticking with it. And a United Nations report concludes that when young girls stay in school, they bear fewer children. So education leads to more sustainable population growth and improved environmental and economic conditions.

For all of these reasons, the President has proposed that the United States participate in a multilateral pilot program that will be a cooperative effort with the WFP, PVOs, and others.

I would like to spend a few moments outlining how the program would work here and in participating countries.

In the United States, the program would be coordinated through the existing interagency Food Assistance Policy Council that is chaired by USDA and includes representatives from the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), the Department of State, and the Office of Management and Budget (OMB). We would use the authority of the Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC) Charter Act to procure surplus commodities, and use the authority of Section 416(b) of the Agricultural Act of 1949, which provides for overseas donations of commodities in CCC's inventory to carry out assistance programs in developing and friendly

countries. The commodities most suitable for this initiative are soybeans, corn, wheat, rice, and nonfat dry milk, and products containing these commodities.

The Policy Council would choose participating countries based on their need, but also on their contribution of resources, their commitment to expanding access to basic education, their commitment to assuming responsibility for operating the program within a reasonable time frame, and their current infrastructure and ability to deliver food to schools. We also will manage the program in a way that does not hinder sales opportunities for local farmers or distribute U.S. or Allied commercial exports.

For the first year of the program, the United States will invest \$300 million in commodities and transportation costs. This would help feed up to 9 million school and pre-school children in selected developing countries. Working through the World Food Program and private voluntary organizations, the U.S. would provide food commodities for direct feeding programs in schools. Some of the commodities will be monetized (or sold) to fund other food, on-the-ground, and administrative costs. The proceeds from these sales would be used to manage the programs; fund associated efforts such as buying local foodstuffs that may be more appropriate for local tastes or for the school meals program, or buying equipment; and pay storage, processing, handling, and transportation costs.

As I mentioned earlier, this will be a multilateral effort, and we are optimistic that other developed countries will participate. Earlier this week, some of the countries that make up the Group of Eight indicated their support. During my upcoming trip to Africa, I will discuss the need for this type of program with government officials, the private sector, and the aid communities there.

In the U.S. and the rest of the industrialized world, development ideas are often met with resistance from individuals who like to portray them as a waste of public money or some kind of global welfare. To them I say: international development and food security are as pragmatic as they are humanitarian. In addition to being moral imperatives, they are in our self-interest.

No one knows that better than America's farmers and ranchers. During the past two years, the United States has provided record amounts of food aid – support that helped not only people and countries in need, but also our farmers who were reeling from rock bottom prices, bumper worldwide crops, and reduced global demand.

I am confident that a global food for education initiative has the potential to become an outstanding example of the U.S. commitment to international development and food security.

Mr. Chairman, that completes my statement. I would be happy to answer any questions.

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