

Action Sheet

JUNE 2022

Holy Father, do not let us be indifferent to what is happening around us. Send your Holy Spirit to water our arid hearts with hope, stoke in us the flame of fraternity, make us set the world on fire with acts of justice in favor of those who suffer most.

SKILL AND RELATIONSHIP BUILDING ACTION

Our missionary action is to write an email to your U.S. Representative on the 2023 Farm Bill. Urge Congress to protect lifesaving international food assistance programs authorized in Title III of the Farm Bill and to improve the efficiency and flexibility of international poverty-focused programs. See details below.

LASER TALK

Access to sufficient, nutritious food for all people is decreasing at a rapid pace globally. In 2021, the United Nations World Food Program estimates that “nearly 193 million people were in Crisis or worse, as a result of intensified conflict, significant economic shocks and some of the most severe weather extremes in recent years, or a combination of these drivers.” Pope Francis reminds us that “food shortage is not something natural.” Conflict, climate change and the COVID-19 pandemic continue to drive this increase in hunger. While the current situation is grave, there is hope in knowing that sustainable solutions exist. Pope Francis says, “each of us has a role to play in transforming food systems for the benefit of people and the planet.”

U.S. international food assistance programs like Food for Peace, McGovern-Dole, Food for Progress and the Farmer-to-Farmer program reduce hunger and malnutrition by improving the livelihoods of small farmers, helping children excel in their studies and leveraging the expertise of volunteers to support food security outcomes. The Farm Bill sets our nation’s agriculture policy and authorizes these programs, which are funded through the annual federal appropriations process. In anticipation of the 2023 Farm Bill, we look forward to proposing improvements to these programs to make them more effective and allow us to serve more of our sisters and brothers.

BACKGROUND

Your Farm Bill advocacy will focus on the following four international programs: Food for Peace, McGovern-Dole Food for Education, Food for Progress and Farmer-to-Farmer. In June, you are invited to educate your U.S. Representative on Food for Progress. Share about its impact on our global family as it addresses hunger and climate change.

Food for Progress addressing hunger and climate change

Food for Progress is the only mandatory-funded Farm Bill program that CRS advocates on behalf of. The program assists low- and middle-income nations with strengthening and bringing their agricultural sectors up to date. The program donates U.S. agricultural commodities to recipient countries, selling them on the local market and then using the proceeds to fund economic, agricultural and development projects. Food for Progress projects train farmers in animal and plant health, help improve farming methods, develop road and utility systems, establish cooperatives for farmers, provide microcredit, or small loans at low interest and develop agricultural systems. Greater production and improved livelihoods for farmers supports individuals and families being able to afford regular, more nutritious meals with this improved income. Better farming methods improves the community’s ability to adapt to climate change and take better care of the land.

Progresa Caribe in Nicaragua

One example of a Food for Progress program is Progresa Caribe. Focused on the Caribbean coastal region of Nicaragua that was devastated by Hurricanes Eta and Iota, this program focuses on strengthening the cacao value chain. A value chain can be defined as “the full range of activities that firms and workers do to bring a product from its conception to its end use and beyond.”¹ Progresa Caribe is financed by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). It works with small-scale cacao producers and livestock ranchers in vulnerable municipalities. It has a unique focus on cacao agroforestry systems. The USDA defines agroforestry as “the intentional integration of trees and shrubs into crop and animal farming systems to create environmental, economic and social benefits.”² Cacao provides income-generating opportunities in the short term, developing sustainable livelihoods in the medium and long term and preserving and regenerating natural resources. CRS helps producers organize, access financial services, improve farm infrastructure and connect to buyers. As communities learn new skills, CRS works with companies committed to sustainably sourcing their products.

Since 2014, this Farm Bill authorized program in Nicaragua has benefitted 5,164 individuals directly. Nearly 19,000 hectares of land are now under improved techniques or technologies as a result of this program. More than 3,000 hectares of land have been cropped with improved seed or planting. Reauthorizing Food for Progress (and the other international programs) in the 2023 Farm Bill signals that our nation prioritizes addressing hunger and climate change both locally and around the world.

TAKE ACTION: Write a personal email to your U.S. Representative (House of Representatives)

1. Go to the website of your U.S. Representative and see how they want to be emailed (e.g., by filling out an online form, by emailing a specific email address from the website or continue to email your contact in the office).
2. Introduction: Provide personal information to root yourself in the community (e.g., I am active in my local parish, I volunteer at our local food bank, etc.) and briefly share why this issue matters to you. Share connections to your faith, activities you’re involved with in your community to help children and families, etc.
3. Express gratitude to your U.S. Representative: Express gratitude for something related to global poverty or for their service in Congress.
4. Make the ask: During this time of unprecedented and dire food insecurity in the world, we urge Congress to protect lifesaving programs authorized in Title III of the Farm Bill that work towards ending hunger for the world’s most marginalized and vulnerable people. As the Farm Bill process begins, we request for Congress to prioritize much-needed changes to international poverty-focused programs. We look forward to being in contact soon with specific recommendations for increased flexibility/efficiency so that U.S. government implementing partners, like CRS, can utilize the most appropriate approaches to meet the needs of those impacted by severe and chronic hunger and malnutrition.
5. Support your argument: Use the background information in this document and/or the information provided on the June 2022 National Chapter & Club Call to share about the impact Food for Progress is having on our global family and how it addresses hunger and climate change.
6. Repeat the ‘ask’, say thank you, and request a response: Leave your name, address, phone number and email address so the office can get back to you with their decision.
7. Log your emails in the [Chapter Community site](#): Use [this Help Guide](#) to log your action.

¹ Cambridge Institute for Sustainability Leadership. [What is a value chain? Definitions and characteristics](#). University of Cambridge website.

² United States Department of Agriculture. [Agroforestry](#). USDA website.

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Holy Father, transform our attitudes and make our minds fertile to new ways of living, enlighten us to propose, support and defend projects and laws that protect the environment, take our hands to till ways of solidarity, and make our works and words bear fruit. Continue your prayer with the [Prayer for Climate Change](#).

SKILL AND RELATIONSHIP BUILDING ACTION

Our missionary action is to email your U.S. Senators on the 2023 Farm Bill. Urge Congress to protect lifesaving international food assistance programs authorized in Title III of the Farm Bill and to improve the efficiency and flexibility of international poverty-focused programs. See details below.

LASER TALK

Access to sufficient, nutritious food for all people is decreasing at a rapid pace globally. In 2021, the United Nations World Food Program estimates that “nearly 193 million people were in Crisis or worse, as a result of intensified conflict, significant economic shocks and some of the most severe weather extremes in recent years, or a combination of these drivers.” Pope Francis reminds us that “food shortage is not something natural.” Conflict, climate change and the COVID-19 pandemic continue to drive this increase in hunger. While the current situation is grave, there is hope in knowing that sustainable solutions exist. Pope Francis says, “each of us has a role to play in transforming food systems for the benefit of people and the planet.”

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BACKGROUND

Your Farm Bill advocacy will focus on the following four international programs: Food for Peace, McGovern-Dole Food for Education, Food for Progress and Farmer-to-Farmer. These programs address hunger and help communities cope with the effects of climate change impacting our global family.

CRS’ approach to addressing climate change

As an organization that works with the global Catholic Church to implement humanitarian and development projects serving those living in poverty, we know firsthand the widespread effects of the changing climate, from drought in the Horn of Africa to recurring storms in Asia to failing coffee plants in Central America. Beyond changing our own internal policies to reduce the organization’s carbon footprint, Catholic Relief Services (CRS) also works to integrate climate resilience into our work in agriculture and other sectors. A primary focus of CRS’ work in addressing climate change is through restoring degraded agricultural landscapes to create new farming opportunities and support sustainable livelihoods.

Restoring degraded soils is a low-cost, nature-based solution that addresses problems of erosion, moisture retention and fertility. But these solutions need to be applied at scale for the sake of both vulnerable farmers and the health of the land

they depend on. In its efforts to scale this approach, CRS will work with networks of local partners and communities, connecting farmers' needs, capacities and potential to local government and private sector goals and investments. Together with others, CRS is sustainably catalyzing system change for the benefit of small-holder farmers and their family – and the global food systems for generations to come.

Farmer-to-Farmer

The Farmer-to-Farmer Program promotes sustainable economic growth, food security, and agricultural development worldwide. Volunteer technical assistance from U.S. farmers, agribusinesses, cooperatives and universities helps developing countries to improve productivity, access new markets and conserve environmental and natural resources. This people-to-people exchange promotes international goodwill, understanding of US foreign assistance programs and private involvement in development activities. Farmer-to-Farmer volunteers work with farmers, producer groups, rural businesses, and service providers to develop local capacity necessary to increase food production and rural incomes, expand economic growth, and address environmental and natural resource management challenges. CRS implements Farmer-to-Farmer globally, facilitating volunteer technical assistance in Benin, East Timor, Ethiopia, Nepal, Rwanda, and Uganda.

During the 2018-2023 program cycle, a Rwandan farmer's yields successfully doubled after a Farmer-to-Farmer volunteer training on replenishing soil fertility and working within the local ecosystem.

In Uganda, an estimated 1,969 project participants benefitted from volunteer support during the 2018-2023 program cycle. Volunteers help participants to improve their household income and meet their basic needs including health, food and save for education of their children.

TAKE ACTION: Email your U.S. Senators

1. Go to the websites of your U.S. Senators and see how they want to be emailed (e.g., by filling out an online form, by emailing a specific email address from the website or continue to email your contact in the office).
2. Introduction: Provide personal information to root yourself in the community (e.g., I am active in my local parish, I volunteer at our local food bank, etc.) and briefly share why this issue matters to you. Share connections to your faith, activities you're involved with in your community to help children and families, etc.
3. Express gratitude to your U.S. Senators: Express gratitude for something related to global poverty or for their service in Congress.
4. Make the ask: During this time of unprecedented and dire food insecurity in the world, we urge Congress to protect lifesaving programs authorized in Title III of the Farm Bill that work towards ending hunger for the world's most marginalized and vulnerable people. As the Farm Bill process begins, we request that Congress prioritize much-needed changes to international poverty-focused programs. We look forward to being in contact soon with specific recommendations for increased flexibility/efficiency so that U.S. government implementing partners, like CRS, can utilize the most appropriate approaches to meet the needs of those impacted by severe and chronic hunger and malnutrition.
5. Support your argument: Use the background information in this document to share about how Farmer-to-Farmer is having a far-reaching impact on our global family and how it is addressing hunger and the effects of climate change.
6. Repeat the 'ask', say thank you, and request a response: Leave your name, address, phone number and email address so the office can get back to you with their decision.

