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Feed the Future is the U.S. Government's global hunger and food security initiative. For more information, or to **subscribe to this publication**, please visit www.feedthefuture.gov.

FOOD SECURITY HIGHLIGHTS

Former Agriculture Secretaries Discuss Food Security as National Security, Urge Bipartisan Support for Feed the Future

On February 23, U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack kicked off the commemoration of the department's 150th anniversary at USDA's 2012 Agricultural Outlook Forum, titled "Moving Agriculture Forward." Secretary Vilsack moderated a dynamic plenary panel featuring seven former Secretaries of Agriculture. A recurring theme of the discussion was the importance of food security and its relationship to national security, with many of the panelists remarking on the intrinsic link between the food supply and stable governments.



From left to right, former Secretaries of Agriculture Schaffer, Johanns, Veneman, and USDA Secretary Vilsack on the plenary panel of the 2012 Agricultural Outlook Forum. Credit: Robert Nichols/USDA

Senator Mike Johanns (R-NE), who served as Secretary of Agriculture from 2005 – 2008 under President George W. Bush, said that he is "so convinced about this food security – national security issue, that if there is one thing I could ask all two thousand people who are here to do, it's to commit to feeding people, whether here or in another part of the world." He noted that this issue transcends partisan lines, saying that "Voting to provide aid to feed people is just simply the right thing to do," regardless of one's political affiliation. Watch the videos of the [first](#) and [second](#) panel sessions.

[Visit FeedtheFuture.gov to read more on this story.](#)

U.S. Government Joins Private Sector Partners to Forge Collaboration on Feed the Future Goals

With a projected population increase to more than nine billion by 2050, the world will need to more than double its productivity by that year to meet projected demands for food. As part of the response to this challenge, Feed the Future hosted its first [Public-Private Partnership Technical Forum](#) on February 22 at the White House Conference Center. Like the [Feed the Future](#)

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[Research Forum](#) last June and regular NGO stakeholder forums, this event was held to engage critical partners in Feed the Future goals. [Read more.](#)

AFSI Group Meeting Engages Civil Society, Advances Accountability on Food Security Assistance

On February 2-3 at the U.S. Department of State, Acting Special Representative for Global Food Security Jonathan Shrier chaired the first meeting of the L'Aquila Food Security Initiative (AFSI) group of 2012. The discussion covered progress on AFSI financial pledges and accountability reporting; strengthening investment in research, science, and technology; managing for development results; and the future of AFSI. [Read more.](#)

Feed the Future Launches Nutrition Programs in Africa

As part of its ongoing commitment to improve access to adequate nutrition, Feed the Future is working with partner countries to roll out new programs in the field that address undernutrition, especially among children. Three of those countries are highlighted here.

Feed the Future Works with Government of Uganda and Private Sector to Advance Policy Solutions to Undernutrition

An alliance between Feed the Future, the Government of Uganda, and the private sector is helping combat the devastating effects of vitamin and mineral deficiencies in women and children through a new policy initiative to increase the nutrition of common food products. Since 2005, USAID has supported the Government of Uganda's health and regulatory authorities and private producers to help vulnerable people get needed nutrients without requiring them to significantly change their eating habits. USAID introduced the voluntary program of oil fortification as a cost-effective way of reaching the 20 percent of Ugandan women and children who suffer from vitamin A deficiency. [Read more.](#)

USAID and Local Ghana Government Launch Feed the Future Resilience and Nutrition Project

On February 1, USAID's Bureau for Food Security Assistant to the Administrator Paul Weisenfeld and USAID/Ghana Mission Director Cheryl Anderson signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Ghana's Northern Regional Minister, the Honorable Moses Bukari Mabengba, to officially launch the new Feed the Future Ghana resilience and nutrition project. This project will fund up to 12 district governments in the Northern Region of Ghana for activities including income and diet diversification, access to credit, and health education messages. [Read more.](#)



USAID Assistant to the Administrator Paul Weisenfeld joins Northern Regional Minister Mabengba at MOU signing ceremony. Credit: USAID/Ghana

Feed the Future and Government of Tanzania Advance Nutrition at Local and National Levels

For the past two months, members of the Feed the Future nutrition team in Tanzania have been convening meetings and workshops with regional leaders and councils throughout Tanzania to roll out a comprehensive nutrition program. The Government of Tanzania has been a vigorous advocate for improving nutrition outcomes, having added a line item to the national budget specifically for nutrition. The Feed the Future nutrition team is now working to generate this momentum at the local level. [Read more.](#)

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FIELD STORIES

Feed the Future Helps Scale Up Ridge Tillage in Mali

In Mali, one of the obstacles to agricultural productivity is water runoff and a resulting loss of soil nutrients that are vital for crop growth. A well-documented technological solution to this problem is ridge tillage, or the practice of creating earthen ridges along the contour lines of a sloping field to prevent water runoff (pictured right). Feed the Future beneficiaries in Mali who have employed this practice with assistance from USAID and the Mali National Agricultural Research



IER agronomist and Ridge Tillage Project Head Mamadou Doumbia points to one of several “ados,” or large earthen ridges, which have helped maintain soil quality and boost crop yields in this Konobougou field for over 10 years. Credit: Ryan Vroegindewey/USAID/Mali

Institute (*Institut d'Economie Rurale*, or IER) have seen immediate and dramatic improvements: decreased water runoff by 20-40 percent, the retention of soil nutrients, and increased yields of cereal crops by 30-50 percent. In addition to increasing yields, ridge tillage allows farmers to extend their planting season by two weeks, an important margin in the fragile Sahel region where climate change is bringing irregular seasonal rains.



One impact of ridge tillage in Konobougou has been increased local water table levels, which has enabled women's groups like this one to maintain gardens that diversify household foods and income. Credit: Ryan Vroegindewey/USAID/Mali

In Siguidolo, a village located in Central Mali, the impact of ridge tillage on food security, natural resource management, and resilience is very apparent. Over 90% of farmers in Siguidolo have adopted ridge tillage technology since it was first introduced by IER and expanded by USAID. [Read more.](#)

Feed the Future and World Food Program Open \$1.4 Million Grain Warehouse in Uganda

In collaboration with the U.N. World Food Program (WFP) and the Ugandan Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industries, and Fisheries, Feed the Future officially opened a new \$1.4 million-dollar grain warehouse in Kapchorwa, Uganda in February. The warehouse will allow small farmers to sell quality grain at fair prices in both local and regional markets, and is projected to benefit more than 150 producer organizations, consisting of 20-30 farmers each. [Read more.](#)



Grain warehouse opening ceremony in Kapchorwa. Credit: USAID/Uganda

Conservation Farming Activities Boost Crop Yields for Senegalese Cereal Producers

In Senegal, a Feed the Future campaign aims to increase cereal production for farmers across four regional departments while enhancing sustainable agricultural practices. To measure the effectiveness of conservation farming techniques, Feed the Future conducted an estimation and comparison of 2011 agricultural yields of maize, millet, and sorghum grown both with and without conservation farming techniques. The comparison demonstrated substantial yield increases across the regional departments of Kaolack, Tambacounda, Fatick, and Kédougou. [Read more.](#)



A farm couple's young daughter tags along as they weed a field in southern Senegal where sorghum and millet are grown. A Feed the Future estimation and comparison of 2011 agricultural yields of four key crops demonstrated substantial increases. *Credit: USAID/Senegal*

In Tajikistan, Food Diversity Yields Good Dividends

Standing above her greenhouse, Sayohat Hakimova proudly shows off her onions, cilantro, and dill. This year, in her family's first greenhouse, she was able to plant these greens two months earlier than usual. A 36-year old mother of four and the head of her household, Sayohat is a beneficiary of canning and greenhouse training under Feed the Future. Her family lives on approximately \$100 per month, growing their primary food sources of wheat, potatoes, beans, tomatoes, beets, and turnips. With assistance and training from Feed the Future, Sayohat and her family worked together at the end of winter to construct a greenhouse that works well in the region's windy conditions, and learned to preserve a greater variety of produce that they can preserve for next winter or trade with their neighbors. [Read more.](#)



Sayohat stands with her oldest daughter above their greenhouse frame. *Credit: Mercy Corps*

U.S. Embassy in Kampala Hosts Food Security Fellows

On February 6, the United States Embassy in Uganda hosted 11 American Fellows as part of a U.S. Department of State-funded professional exchange program called, "Professional Fellows Program in Food Security – Critical Mass Leadership Education." The two-year professional exchange program through which the Fellows were hosted enhances international dialogue between professionals in the United States, Uganda, and Kenya who are working in the social, economic, and political aspects of food security, especially as related to urban and peri-urban agriculture. [Read more.](#)

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY IN AGRICULTURE

A Milestone for Common Bean Improvement

An early release of the common bean genome sequence, developed by a consortium of U.S. Universities, USDA's Agricultural Research Service, and scientists from the Department of Energy, is [now available online](#). Common bean is a warm-season, annual legume and an important crop under Feed the Future. The sequence, consisting of more than 26,000 genes, allows researchers to study individual genes that provide tolerance to drought and diseases that devastate common bean yield, and will be a major tool to improve crops. Scientists in the U.S. and elsewhere can use the sequence information to develop molecular tools to accelerate common bean breeding efforts. [Read more](#).

Workshop Solidifies Sustainable Intensification Research Program in Africa

In February, international and local agricultural researchers, policymakers, and donors convened in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, to plan the regional Agricultural Sustainable Intensification Program. The workshop identified priority areas for a five-year research initiative on the mid-elevation, maize-based systems in Eastern and Southern Africa, aiming to increase productivity and incomes of smallholders while conserving the natural resource base. The workshop followed and built on work from similar inception workshops in West Africa and Ethiopia that targeted important agricultural ecologies where hunger and poverty are widespread, but where the potential for ecologically-friendly agricultural growth is also substantial. [Read more](#).

HEARD ON THE HILL

USAID Administrator Rajiv Shah Joins Senator Coons at Opportunity for Africa Conference

Charlene Porter, Department of State IIP Digital: Calling Africa a “continent of tremendous opportunity,” Senator Chris Coons (Democrat), who chairs the African Affairs Subcommittee in the U.S. Senate, joined with USAID Administrator Rajiv Shah to recruit more American business investment for Africa. Coons, who was just back from traveling to Africa with Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton, made his comments at a business conference he hosted in Wilmington, Delaware, January 18. He told participants that some countries on the continent are already booming and that others offer great potential for future economic growth. [Read more](#).

FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

Request for Applications: Agriculture Commercialization and Innovation Activity

USAID recently announced the release of a [Request for Applications \(RFA\) for its new Agriculture Commercialization and Innovation \(AC&I\) Activity](#). AC&I will provide the Bureau for Food Security a platform from which the bureau can fulfill its role to promote new approaches to food security through new and innovative partnerships, tools, and methodologies that improve market access for food insecure households in Feed the Future countries. The AC&I Activity will have four components: Agricultural technology commercialization; Partnership development; Investment design and modeling; Knowledge management. The RFA will accept applications until 4:00 pm EST on March 14, 2012. For more information, visit [grants.gov](#) or [view the full announcement](#).

UPCOMING EVENTS

- February 28 (New York City)
[Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index Roundtable Discussion and Launch](#)
- February 27 – March 9 (New York City)
[UN Commission on the Status of Women](#)
- March 2 – 4 (Catacamas, Honduras)
["Feed the Future: Honduras. A Country in Action" – 7th Annual Universities Fighting World Hunger Summit Honduras 2012](#)
- March 7 – 9 (Rabat, Morocco)
[Global Food Security Forum](#)

NEWS & MEDIA

News

[U.S. Considers 'Women's Empowerment' in Aid, Agency Says](#)

February 27, 2012 (Bloomberg)

[Groundbreaking Index Launched to Empower Women and Fight Hunger](#)

February 27, 2012 (USAID)

[European Union and United States Agree to Historic New Partnership on Organic Trade](#)

February 15, 2012 (USDA)

Op-Eds

[3 Sustainable Federal Government Investments](#)

February 23, 2012, Lewis Humphries (Yahoo Finance)

Blogs

[Bridging the Gap on Agricultural Research and Developing with the Private Sector](#)

February 23, 2012, Catherine Woteki (USDA Blog)

[On Valentine's Day, Reflecting on the Importance of Chocolate Production](#)

February 14, 2012, Margaret Enis (USAID IMPACT)

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<http://feedthefuture.gov/newsletter>.