

**Global Food Security Strategy  
(GFSS)  
Honduras Country Plan**

**March 26, 2018**

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## Acronyms

ACS	Alianza para el Corredor Seco (Dry Corridor Alliance)
AFP	Alliance for Prosperity
AIN-C	Integral Community-based Attention to Children
ASF	Animal Source Foods
BEE	Business Enabling Environment
CABEI	Central American Bank for Economic Integration
CDCS	Country Development Cooperation Strategy
CEN	U.S. Strategy for Central America
CENs	Nutrition Education Centers
CLA	Collaborating, Learning, and Adapting
COPECO	GOH Disaster Response Authority
COTISAN	Interdisciplinary Technical Committee on Food Security and Nutrition
DHS	Demographic and Health Survey
DO	Development Objective
EU	European Union
G2G	Government to Government
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
GFSS	Global Food Security Strategy
GOH	Government of Honduras
IHCAFE	National Coffee Institute
IDB	Inter-American Development Bank
INA	GOH National Agrarian Institute
INE	GOH National Statistics Institute in Honduras
IR	Intermediate Results
LAC	Latin America and Caribbean
MiAmbiente	GOH Ministry of Environment
MSME	Micro-, Small, and Medium Enterprise
NGO	Non-Governmental Organizations
PBS	Population Based Survey
PyENSAN	National Food Security and Nutrition Strategy, Policy, and Action Plan
SAG	GOH Ministry of Agriculture
SBCC	Social and Behavior Change Communication

SEDIS	GOH Social Safety Net Ministry
SESAL	GOH Health Ministry
SINAGER	National Risk Management System
USDA	U.S. Department of Agriculture
USG	U.S. Government
UTSAN	GOH Technical Unit for Food Security and Nutrition
WB	World Bank
WEAI	Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index
WFP	World Food Program
ZOI	Zone of Influence

## Introduction

The Global Food Security Strategy (GFSS) Country Plan for Honduras was co-written by U.S. Government (USG) agencies involved in food security and nutrition work, after extensive consultation with stakeholders from government ministries, private companies, universities, research institutes, international and local non-governmental organizations (NGOs), donors, and international organizations, and was given extensive review and commentary by USG interagency partners in Washington, DC. As a living document, it is intended to be updated as needed in consultation with those parties over time.

The GFSS Country Plan serves as an overarching framework for integrated food security and nutrition programming. The plan is intended to describe the key drivers of food insecurity, malnutrition and poverty. These key drivers stem from a complex set of underlying conditions that exist at the individual, household, community, and system level. At the design and procurement stages, the targeting, results framework and program components will require further refinement to operationalize integrated and holistic approaches. Interventions at all levels will need to work in complement to each other to sustainably tackle food insecurity, malnutrition and poverty. In particular, the most vulnerable and poor populations do not have sufficient assets, skills, and capabilities to participate in market operations. These populations will need to be supported to develop capacity over time to participate in value chains so that they can become a viable livelihood option. As GFSS programming is refined through the design, procurement and implementation processes, selected value chains will explicitly prioritize inclusive growth and interventions will include support to the most vulnerable and poor populations to enable them to graduate into selected value chains and benefit from the GFSS-supported livelihoods and market development.

Budget assumptions for interagency contributions to this plan reflect the FY 2017 Estimate and FY 2018 President's Budget, based on information publicly available at the time this document was prepared. Out year budget assumptions reflect a straight-line to the FY 2018 President's Budget. Any funding beyond FY 2017 is subject to the availability of funds, as determined by the President's Budget and a Congressional appropriation. Budget assumptions may require revision in the future, based on future President's Budgets.

## 1. Food Security and Nutrition Context in Honduras

Honduras is one of the poorest nations in the Americas. Honduras's per capita gross national income (GNI, Atlas Method, 2016) of \$2,150 lags far behind the average of \$8,260 for the Latin America and Caribbean (LAC) region, and even behind its Central American neighbors of El Salvador or Guatemala (\$3,920 and \$3,790 GNI per capita in 2016, respectively)<sup>1</sup>. As of June 2017 the national poverty rate in Honduras was calculated at 64.3 percent, and the rural rate at 69.3 percent (58.8 percent of rural people live in extreme poverty)<sup>2</sup>. The National Statistics Institute in Honduras (INE) defines the poverty line as the cost of a standardized basket of food and basic goods and services, while the extreme poverty line is the cost of just the food portion of this basket. The GINI coefficient for income inequality in Honduras stands at .525 in 2017 (down from a recent high of .597 in 2005), which places it among the most income-unequal countries in Latin America.<sup>3</sup>

Food security is defined by the U.S. Government as “access to—and availability, utilization, and stability of—sufficient food to meet caloric and nutritional needs for an active and healthy life.”<sup>4</sup> Persistent rural

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<sup>1</sup> World Bank Country Data 2016, <https://data.worldbank.org/country/honduras?view=chart>

<sup>2</sup> Latest household survey by INE,

<http://www.ine.gob.hn/images/Productos%20ine/encuesta%20de%20hogares/EPHPM%202017/002%20Resumen%20Ejecutivo%202017.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> *Idem*

<sup>4</sup> U.S. Government Global Food Security Strategy FY2017-2021.

poverty combined with high economic inequality results in chronic food insecurity for many Hondurans. An estimated 1.5 million Hondurans<sup>5</sup> (of a total population of 8,859,980<sup>6</sup>) face hunger at some point each year, and regular, prolonged droughts affect the food and nutritional security of the most vulnerable populations in the southern and western regions. According to FAOStat, in the period from 2014-2016 14.8 percent of people in Honduras did not consume enough calories as recommended for a normal population. According to the latest Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) in Honduras covering 2011-2012, 23 percent of children under five were stunted in their growth, an indicator of chronic undernutrition together with lack of access to health services and limited conditions of hygiene and care. This rate climbs to 29 percent in rural areas, and 48 percent in the departments of Intibucá and Lempira.<sup>7</sup> The Global Hunger Index for Honduras is 14.3, which places it in the “Moderate” category for hunger, although the “subnational inequality of child stunting” (the difference in stunting levels between the most and least prosperous regions) for Honduras is among the highest of any country; the rates of child stunting in certain departments of Honduras are comparable to the national rates for high-stunting countries like Guatemala, Pakistan, Yemen, and Niger.<sup>8</sup> However, like in Guatemala, stunting is not associated with wasting as in the other mentioned countries, which means that in Central America the supply of energy and, possibly, protein is sufficient to satisfy the requirements of these dietary components for small children. It is fair to state that the main dietary constraint for the Honduran poor is not food quantity but the quality of the diet. Such high rates of poverty and poor dietary quality and health conditions threaten the ability of Hondurans to lead productive and active lives and compromise the development of this generation’s youth (according to the 2013 census, 42 percent of the population is between the ages of 10 and 29).<sup>9</sup>

## 1.1 Workforce

Just under half (45.7 percent) of the Honduran population (and some 60 percent of Honduras’s extreme poor)<sup>10</sup> lives in rural areas. Thirty-three percent of the workforce is employed in agriculture. The national formal unemployment rate is low, only 6.7 percent (4.9 percent in rural areas), of which the rate is 4.0 percent for men and 10.8 percent for women, but “invisible underemployment” is a widespread problem: 44.2 percent of the workforce nationwide (similar rates in both urban and rural populations) works full-time but receives less than minimum wage. Unemployment affects youth more than other groups; 58.9% of the unemployed are under the age of 25.<sup>11</sup> Despite this limitation, paid, off-farm work is seen by many interviewed stakeholders as a more desirable and viable way out of poverty than is production on one’s own farm.

## 1.2 Agriculture

The agriculture sector stands as the top source of income for the poor in Honduras, providing employment and opportunities for economic growth. Yet Honduras is also one of the most vulnerable countries to climate

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<sup>5</sup> World Food Program, et al., (2017). “Food Security and Emigration: Why people flee and the impact on family members left behind in El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras.” September 2017.

<sup>6</sup>

<http://www.ine.gob.hn/images/Productos%20ine/encuesta%20de%20hogares/EPHPM%202017/002%20Resumen%20Ejecutivo%202017.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> DHS <http://evaw-global-database.unwomen.org/-/media/files/un%20women/vaw/vaw%20survey/honduras%20vaw%20survey.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> <http://ebrary.ifpri.org/utils/getfile/collection/p15738coll2/id/131422/filename/131628.pdf>

<sup>9</sup> 2013 Honduran Census. <http://www.ine.gob.hn/index.php/component/content/article?id=81>

<sup>10</sup> We get this number by comparing the INE (census bureau)’s rates of extreme poverty for rural areas vs. the overall extreme poverty rate, and multiplying by the 45% that rural population represents overall.

[http://www.ine.gob.hn/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=91](http://www.ine.gob.hn/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=91)

<sup>11</sup>

<http://www.ine.gob.hn/images/Productos%20ine/encuesta%20de%20hogares/EPHPM%202017/002%20Resumen%20Ejecutivo%202017.pdf>

shocks<sup>12</sup>; drought, flooding, and consistently higher temperatures exacerbate poverty and food insecurity and make agriculture more difficult, altering production and market patterns. This climate vulnerability sometimes manifests itself in unexpected ways; the recent pine bark beetle epidemic (a consequence of years of drought and heat) destroyed large swaths of forests that provide livelihoods and ecosystem services that farmers depend on. This loss came on top of the conversion of five million hectares from forest to other uses since 1974.

Corn, beans, and coffee are the most important crops for the typical Honduran farmer, who cultivates on small plots, often on hillsides. There are certain agricultural products, such as banana, pineapple, melon, shrimp, and oil palm, that are important for Honduras as a whole, but these are not cultivated by the majority of farmers, instead being concentrated on large plantations in a few geographical areas. Few poor households cultivate significant areas of high value crops such as vegetables, fruits, or tubers, even though the climate is suitable for horticultural production. Poor roads and long distances hinder households' access to markets (just over 20 percent of the roads in Honduras are paved)<sup>13</sup>. The agricultural sector in Honduras has lost about one-third of its revenue in the last two decades, among other things because of a price decrease of export crops, notably bananas and coffee.<sup>14</sup>

Current agricultural practices produce poor yields and deplete soil nutrients. Antiquated crop management practices also leave households exposed to diseases such as coffee leaf rust. Most plots lack irrigation and rely on rain-fed agriculture, leaving farmers vulnerable to crop failures caused by drought. Beyond the general lack of financing to install irrigation that would allow farmers to produce higher-value crops and to withstand climatic variation, water is scarce in many parts of Honduras, especially in the Dry Corridor, such that there is often a limit to how much land could be irrigated even when other constraints are overcome. Where water is captured for irrigation or household use, water quality is a challenge due to inadequate watershed management and conservation practices. Severe, El Niño-related droughts from 2014-2016 had devastating effects on agriculture in western Honduras. Many producers of maize and beans, the main staples, continue to recover from the impact of the strongest El Niño in 30 years. Droughts also had a negative effect on sources for safe drinking water, and in the future there will be fewer water sources for irrigation as human needs take priority.

Women participate in all aspects of farming, though they are rarely considered farmers in their own right. In western Honduras, men are considered to be the main source of day-to-day farm labor, though women, children, and even hired help provide much labor during harvest of horticulture and coffee crops. Most housework and childcare is performed by women and girls, and women's participation in public and community events is often contingent on receiving permission from their spouse and making sure that food and childcare needs are provided for while the woman is out.<sup>15</sup>

Certain markets for agricultural goods are relatively well-developed, even in poorer and more remote parts of Honduras; in fact, one of the major successes of USG support to Honduran agriculture in the 1990s was the creation and strengthening of value chains for many non-traditional export crops such as melon and oriental vegetables. However, many farmers lack the money to participate fully in these and other markets either as sellers or consumers of high-quality, high-value, nutrient-dense foods (some exceptions in which farmers *are* beginning to benefit from large value chains include bean and honey production). It also appears that even producers of nutrient-rich foods often do not consume them themselves; dietary diversity is low in many rural areas, where most meals are centered on maize and beans, with very low presence of animal source foods (ASF). Unfortunately, parents have limited nutritional knowledge and do not know what types of food to purchase to improve dietary diversity or complement the micronutrient intakes provided by the

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<sup>12</sup> <http://germanwatch.org/en/download/20432.pdf>

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/fields/2085.html>

<sup>14</sup> <http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/honduras/overview#1>

<sup>15</sup> Field workshops

common staples and some fruits and vegetables. Poor roads add to transport costs and spoilage rate for producers looking to supply promising markets in Tegucigalpa or San Salvador (in the latter case, inefficient, unclear, or nonexistent border procedures further add to costs). Exploitative middlemen with a short-term vision of profit take advantage of the relative isolation and poor negotiating position of small farmers in Honduras by buying unprocessed goods (such as unshelled coffee) at a low price. Conversely, poor road conditions in some areas of the country create micro-market opportunities (in milk, for example) wherein local producers are able to compete even with efficient large-scale national producers, because transport adds to the effective cost of products brought from outside the immediate vicinity.

Since the 1994 Ley de Modernización Agrícola, which did away with the national public agricultural extension system, technical assistance for farmers is generally lacking, and where it is present, assistance is provided by a mosaic of NGOs, donors, private sector actors, and some residual public institutions. By most accounts, the USG is the largest provider of agricultural extension in Honduras. According to a September 2016 forum convened by DICTA, the research arm of the Ministry of Agriculture, SAG has limited financial and human resources, which does not allow them to have a full presence in rural areas or to oversee all agricultural extension services. To overcome this, SAG has partnered with an array of donors, including the USG, and provided support for the Alliance for the Dry Corridor, which is a GOH strategy to boost agricultural production. In addition, Honduras has a promising research and extension infrastructure in the installations of IHCAFE (the national coffee institute); the Ministry of Agriculture's research arm DICTA, which has become more agile due in part to recent trilateral support from Brazil and USAID; and FHIA, the Honduran Agricultural Research Foundation, which was created with USAID support in the 1980s. Although efforts are in place to support agriculture, with the USG being a major player in research and extension, there are technical and coordination limitations that hinder further progress for food security in Honduras.

Many farmers and off-farm agricultural businesses lack access to finance to invest in more productive systems. This problem is starting to be addressed by certain actors, for example by a national trust fund for agricultural investment, or by input suppliers and produce buyers that provide operating capital to growers. A robust network of village banks (*cajas rurales*) represents a promising source of finance that is self-sustaining and well-adapted to local micro-contexts.<sup>16</sup> According to the USG's Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index (WEAI), one of the major factors limiting women's empowerment and income is a lack of access to finance. Unfortunately, this is a problem even in locally-managed *cajas rurales*, which tend to have few women on their governing boards and among their members.

Security of land tenure is a factor that strongly affects willingness of the producer to invest in irrigation and other productivity-enhancing practices or tools. If land is rented, there is no incentive for the producer to invest money and time to improve the land, since the benefits would accrue to the owner while the risk is taken by the tenant farmer. Understanding the obstacles to get access to land, especially for women and youth, is a major issue to be addressed. One promising point is the 2016 Family Law that mandates all new property acquired by a married couple must be co-titled with the names of both spouses.<sup>17</sup> Indigenous people in western Honduras often have secure land title thanks to agrarian reform processes carried out by the GOH's National Agrarian Institute (INA).

A repressive social order of machismo limits women's participation and productivity in farming, ability to earn income, and influence over how earnings are spent. In most communities, women are the main or sole caretakers of children, the household, and the kitchen; the large time burden on women prevents their further integration into the paid production system. They also suffer from low self-esteem, and are impacted by cultural norms and often by romantic partners who may discourage them from participating in meetings or other community events. A large unmet need for family planning services leads to large family sizes, which

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<sup>16</sup> Field workshops and stakeholder interviews

<sup>17</sup> *Ibidem*



add to women's time burden. Meanwhile, problems like alcoholism and family disintegration (often linked to absent parents who have migrated in search of dignified work) plague many families, and make it even more difficult to escape poverty.<sup>18</sup>

### 1.3 Nutrition

Poverty and lack of nutrition education have been identified by the Food Security and Nutrition roundtable of the Government of Honduras (GOH) and donors as the two major drivers of child malnutrition in Honduras. Experience from Feed the Future in Honduras has revealed that childhood illness, specifically episodes of diarrhea and bronchial infections, is an important contributor to child underweight and stunting. In the household and community, the presence of fecal bacteria, both animal and human, causes diarrheal and other diseases that stunt growth and sap the productivity of the entire family. Research by the Nutrition Innovation Lab shows that stunting is most strongly correlated with intestinal injury and permeability (environmental enteropathy), influenced by poor access to clean water and good sanitation and hygiene. In other words, repeated bouts of diarrhea caused by dirty water and poor sanitation make children's bodies less able to absorb the nutrients from the food they eat. Therefore, improvements in sanitation and hygiene, better diets, and access to clean water are all necessary to improve nutritional status. According to the latest household survey published by the INE in June 2017, 22 percent of rural households in Honduras do not have access to an adequate water source, and 14.5 percent of rural households do not have access to an adequate sanitation system. Even many households classified as having access to an adequate water source are in fact drawing their water from contaminated streams or wells. There is a huge disparity in stunting according to maternal education and wealth levels—only 11 percent of children whose mothers have secondary education are stunted, while the rate rises to 48 percent of children whose mothers have had no formal education. Similarly, 8 percent of children in the highest wealth quintile are stunted, while 42 percent of children in the lowest wealth quintile are stunted.<sup>19</sup>

Honduras has made important progress in the last 25 years toward reducing stunting in children under five years old, with the rate declining from 42 percent in 1991 to 23 percent in 2012. Underweight (weight for age) was also significantly lowered over the same period<sup>20</sup>, and there is negligible child wasting<sup>21</sup>. Nevertheless, stunting rates of the rural poor are still far from satisfactory.

According to the experience of USAID field technicians supporting the GOH's community nutrition program, the very young age of mothers is also a risk factor for stunting in children.<sup>22</sup> The median age of first childbirth in Honduras is about 20 years, meaning that many women are having their first child while they are still growing adolescents.<sup>23</sup> Close birth spacing is another factor that increases child stunting<sup>24</sup>; among mothers ages 15-19, 19.1% of births occur with less than 18 months between them, and over 50%

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<sup>18</sup> DHS, field workshops, direct field observations

<sup>19</sup> DHS

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Prevalence lower than 2.5% of wasting means that there is not wasting, as this is the normal rate of a normal population.

<sup>22</sup> Such direct field observations jibe with academic work indicating increased risk for under-2 stunting, in addition to numerous other adverse neonatal outcomes, for mothers of young age. Cf. for example Fall, Caroline H D et al. Association between maternal age at childbirth and child and adult outcomes in the offspring: a prospective study in five low-income and middle-income countries (COHORTS collaboration). *The Lancet Global Health*, Volume 3, Issue 7, e366 - e377

<sup>23</sup> The DHS shows 28.1% of 15-19 year old rural girls in marriages or civil unions, and 24.9% of 17 year olds having been pregnant in their lives, and 29.3% of rural 15-19 year olds having been pregnant.

<sup>24</sup> Fink G, Sudfeld CR, Danaei G, Ezzati M, Fawzi WW (2014) Scaling-Up Access to Family Planning May Improve Linear Growth and Child Development in Low and Middle Income Countries. *PLoS ONE* 9(7): e102391. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0102391>

of births with less than two years of spacing.<sup>25</sup> Both young age of mothers and close birth spacing are related to unmet demand for family planning services, as well as an oppressive machista culture in which women don't have complete control over their reproductive health. Analysis of the DHS shows high rates of domestic violence against women, and local consultations have identified sexual harassment and assault as a common occurrence in the lives of Honduran women.<sup>26</sup> A Gender-Based Violence assessment currently underway will shed more light on these trends in western Honduras. As laid out in a 2006 UNICEF report: "Where women have low status and are denied a voice in household decisions, they are most likely to be undernourished themselves and less likely to have access to resources that can be directed toward children's nutrition."<sup>27</sup> Therefore, it can be assumed that these different forms of violence against women in Honduras have a noxious effect on child stunting, as disempowered and injured women are less able to perform productive and household tasks.

According to the 2012 DHS, only 31 percent of children under six months of age are exclusively breastfed, and only 59 percent receive a diverse diet while weaning after six months. Twenty-nine percent of children under five and 12.1 percent of women of childbearing age are anemic. As mentioned above, diets in Honduras, especially in rural areas, are characterized by low dietary diversity, based mainly on maize and beans without many micronutrient-dense foods such as fruits and vegetables, or animal-source foods like eggs, dairy products, poultry, meat, and fish. At the same time, the general population is increasingly overweight and obese. In addition to availability and access to a good quality diet, a lack of nutrition education and health behavior change programming has been identified by the GOH and donors as a major factor underlying both stunting and overweight. It is estimated that more people are now overweight than underweight in Honduras, and the costs of treating chronic diseases such as diabetes and heart conditions are mounting in the country. Less than five percent of women of childbearing age (15-49) are underweight nationwide (though this proportion climbs to 12.1 percent of women 15-19 years of age), while 51.3 percent of women ages 15-49 are overweight or obese<sup>28</sup>.

A bright point for improving nutrition is the GOH's AIN-C program (Integrated Community-level Child Health Services). This program extends the reach of public health providers through a network of community health volunteers that regularly track growth and health of children in a given area, and that ideally provide follow-up attention in the form of home visits, training, and counseling to families with children under two who are showing signs of malnutrition (slow progress in weight or height gain from month to month). The USG supports AIN-C by providing training and accompaniment, both directly to these community volunteers, and through capacity building of decentralized health providers, so that they can offer more expert advice on topics like household hygiene, breastfeeding, child feeding (especially during weaning), and nutritious recipes. While the volunteer basis and relatively low levels of GOH funding for AIN-C have limited its reach and effectiveness, this may be changing as the GOH and actors like the Inter-American Development Bank and Canadian Cooperation prioritize child nutrition and decentralization of health services.

## **1.4 Governance, Education, and Services**

Extreme poverty in western Honduras is not simply a lack of income-generating opportunities; rather it is linked to a variety of socio-economic challenges including poor health status, low educational levels, inadequate infrastructure, and weak governance. Honduras has a conditional cash transfer program for health and educational purposes (Vida Mejor) that has great potential to benefit vulnerable families.

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<sup>25</sup> DHS

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., also USAID-contracted Gender-based Violence studies

<sup>27</sup> Women and Children The Double Dividend of Gender Equality  
[https://www.unicef.org/publications/files/The\\_State\\_of\\_the\\_Worlds\\_Children\\_2007\\_e.pdf](https://www.unicef.org/publications/files/The_State_of_the_Worlds_Children_2007_e.pdf)

<sup>28</sup> DHS

Stakeholder interviews revealed that some program beneficiaries think the GOH could strengthen its beneficiary selection process and take additional steps to minimize misuse of funds.<sup>29</sup>

Reducing poverty in Honduras requires a comprehensive approach that goes beyond access to food and improved agricultural practices. It requires increased access to quality education, health and other related services, increased investments in roads and infrastructure, and a stronger oversight of national and local resources allocated to poor rural Honduras. Coordination and communication between different Ministries in the national government is a challenge, though measures like the creation of a General Coordinating Secretary of the Government, as well as the interdisciplinary, highly consultative vision of the new Food Security Policy and Strategy (PyENSAN 2030) represent concrete steps to improve these aspects of national governance.<sup>30</sup>

## 1.5 Migration

Food insecurity is both a cause and a consequence of migration. From 2010 to 2015, the number of migrants returned from the US to Honduras increased by 353 percent. In 2014, dramatic spikes in migration to the United States by tens of thousands of families and unaccompanied children from Central America led the USG to develop an interagency strategy that addresses the underlying factors that contribute to migration (U.S. Strategy for Central America). This CEN Strategy aligns with the priorities laid out in the Alliance for Prosperity plan, a document drafted by the Governments of Honduras, El Salvador, and Guatemala to stem the flow of out-migration from their countries.

Reduced agricultural productivity and adverse climatic events (such as droughts and pests) are related causes of irregular emigration from Honduras to the United States. For example, drought induced by El Niño starting in 2014 resulted in a significant increase in irregular migration, with the probability of migrating being higher for men and for families from the Dry Corridor.<sup>31</sup> Low rainfall and drought have been shown over time to be associated with higher levels of migration, especially for young males between ages 15 and 25.<sup>32</sup>

Widespread poverty and lack of economic opportunities, along with high rates of crime and violence, increase the likelihood of an individual's migrating illegally to the United States. While violence tends to be concentrated in a few major urban areas, a recent study conducted by USAID indicates that, even in rural areas with a reputation for safety and tranquility, youth participate in and are victimized by violence at very high rates.<sup>33</sup> Migration of men working in agriculture (and increasingly of women) is a coping strategy for families facing food insecurity, as it is seen as enabling families to mitigate the risks associated with agricultural shocks.<sup>34</sup>

However, irregular migration has a substantial negative impact on the food security of Hondurans. For poor families, the costs of migrating illegally often outweighs the gains, as the costs incurred to migrate and the lost labor from the absent migrant lead to very high levels of food insecurity for family members left behind.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Stakeholder interviews

<sup>30</sup> Stakeholder interviews

<sup>31</sup> World Food Program, et al., (2017). "Food Security and Emigration: Why people flee and the impact on family members left behind in El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras." September 2017.

<sup>32</sup> Javier Baez, German Caruso, Valerie Mueller, and Chiyu Niu (2017). "Droughts augment youth migration in Northern Latin America and the Caribbean." *Climatic Change*, 140:423-235.

<sup>33</sup> Study by Dr. Rebecca Williams on youth violence in Santa Rosa de Copan, still in press.

<sup>34</sup> WFP 2017

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

## 1.6 Government of Honduras and Donor Priorities

The GOH has enacted several policies and laws over the past two decades to improve food security and nutrition in Honduras. These include the National Food Security and Nutrition Strategy 2010-2022, National Nutrition Policy-2006, the 2014 creation of the Agricultural Reactivation Trust Fund, Food Fortification General Law, Food Security and Nutrition Bill, Health National Plan 2021, and the most recent School Feeding Bill.<sup>36</sup>

The GOH, through its Technical Unit for Food Security and Nutrition (UTSAN, supported in its genesis by the USG), is currently updating the National Food Security and Nutrition Strategy, Policy, and Action Plan (PyENSAN 2030) through a robust consultative process that has gathered input from donors, as well as regional food security roundtables that bring together local government, private sector, and civil society. UTSAN is also now fulfilling its mandate of creating yearly diagnostics and investment plans whereby the contributions of different GOH institutions to food security (Ministries of Education, Agriculture, Health, etc.) are tabulated and aligned into a coherent effort.

The year 2014 saw the establishment of the “Alianza para el Corredor Seco”, or ACS (Dry Corridor Alliance), a multi-donor and GOH initiative for the sustainable development of the southwest border area in Honduras. In addition to the U.S. Government, the World Bank (WB), the Central American Bank for Economic Integration (CABEI), the European Union (EU), and the Government of Canada are also participating in the Dry Corridor Alliance. With an estimated value of about \$300 million over four years (likely to be extended beyond 2018), ACS aims to lift 50,000 families out of extreme poverty, reduce stunting of children under five years of age by 20 percent in targeted communities, and improve more than 280 kilometers of rural roads, providing market access to thousands of beneficiaries. These goals were developed in collaboration with the U.S. Government, and thus extend Feed the Future priorities to a larger region. ACS is building a robust monitoring and evaluation system that draws together data from all the different GOH and donor actors. USAID supports this Alliance directly through a Government-to-Government (G2G) agreement, alignment of its other activities, and shared indicators, helping Honduras realize its own vision for achieving growth and poverty reduction.

The GOH is an active contributor both to the ACS, as well as to other, nationwide programs to improve agricultural productivity and food security. These include a trust to invest directly in agriculture as well as to prompt banks to lend in key agricultural value chains, and a major program to install rainwater harvesting structures to allow supplemental irrigation to extend the growing season and to mitigate dry spells during the rainy season. The GOH funds over 90 percent of the nationwide school feeding program (implemented by the World Food Program), which increasingly includes local purchase of produce as a source of micronutrients to supplement the basic staples procured on the world market by the World Food Program (WFP).

Honduras’s country-led food security process is the foundation for donor and policy dialogue with the GOH on food security. Honduras has an active, formal donor coordination mechanism known as the G-16.

## 2. Targeting

The Country Plan for Honduras maintains the current Zone of Influence (ZOI) of the six western departments (Santa Bárbara, Copán, Ocotepeque, Lempira, Intibucá, and La Paz), because the original criteria for selecting this geographic area under Feed the Future remain relevant. Western Honduras is still the area of most concentrated poverty and stunting in the country (48 percent stunting in the departments of Intibucá and Lempira, for instance)<sup>37</sup>, but at the same time holds great potential for agriculture

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<sup>36</sup> WHO. World Health Organization Policies in Honduras. [Online] Accessed 07 de October, 2017.

<https://extranet.who.int/nutrition/gina/es/policies/1452>

<sup>37</sup> DHS

investments to produce the highest marginal reduction in extreme poverty. Western Honduras forms part of the Dry Corridor, the driest and most climate-vulnerable part of the country. As such, western Honduras is also at the front lines of climate variability, water scarcity, and natural resource governance efforts to improve resilience. A lack of capacity and resources at the municipal level creates challenges throughout western Honduras. Lastly, there are continuing conflicts around natural resources, water, and indigenous rights in this area.

The widespread poverty and lack of economic opportunities in western Honduras increases the likelihood of individuals' migrating to the U.S. The Dry Corridor has "high unemployment, limited and seasonal labor demands and low and irregularly paid wages." Half (47 percent) of Dry Corridor families interviewed for a WFP study are food insecure, levels never before seen in the region. More than half of households in the Dry Corridor spend more than two thirds of their income on food. This indicates a high level of vulnerability to agricultural shocks. El Niño droughts reduced food production in Dry Corridor households, exacerbating problems of food access and availability.<sup>38</sup>

Since the original Feed the Future multi-year strategy was approved in 2011, food security in western Honduras has come into even sharper focus. Under the Country Development Cooperation Strategy (CDCS) for 2015 to 2019, USAID/Honduras built one of its three Development Objectives around the Feed the Future ZOI. This Development Objective, "Extreme Poverty Sustainably Reduced for Vulnerable Populations in Western Honduras", comprises integrated interventions in governance, environment, agriculture, education, and private sector development. In other words, the education, environment, and good governance activities under this Development Objective all aim to provide elements of resilience, human capital, and social services that will reduce poverty and malnutrition in the long term by addressing issues complementary to food security, and these activities rely in turn on Feed the Future activities to achieve their overarching goals. U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) McGovern-Dole Food for Education program in Honduras provides school lunches and academic support for all schools in the department of Intibucá in the ZOI, and is tightly coordinated with the GOH's nationwide school feeding program. Similarly, the Inter-American Foundation's community-level food security grants are primarily based in the Feed the Future ZOI, with the remainder in the Government of Honduras' other prioritized Dry Corridor municipalities. Sixteen municipalities specifically targeted within the GOH's Alliance for Prosperity (AfP) plan are located within the GFSS ZOI. Future USG activities in western Honduras will seek to build on the experiences and best practices identified through ongoing activities to continue to contribute to AfP goals.

Beyond the USG, other donors and the Government of Honduras have coalesced around USAID's efforts, and focused their food security and nutrition work on western Honduras as well. This has been perhaps the greatest and most long lasting achievement of Feed the Future, to draw attention to and galvanize multi-donor and GOH efforts around the ZOI. In fact, the GOH's ACS program that guides, coordinates, and contributes to donor food security efforts in western and southern Honduras, was inspired by and modeled largely on the USG's Feed the Future work, and designed to extend the reach of this model. Within the ACS, some donors (for instance Canada and the World Bank) have made a conscious decision to avoid duplication and overlap by focusing on southern Honduras to complement USG work in the West. For this reason, the GFSS country plan for Honduras will not expand the ZOI into the South.

The six westernmost departments of Honduras have a total 2015 population of 1,725,069, according to the latest Population-Based Survey (PBS) commissioned by USAID. The USG currently reaches some 40,000 farm families (about 200,000 people) with direct programming, about 20,000 of whom earn below \$1.25/person/day, representing roughly 12.7% of the extreme poor in the ZOI (again according to the PBS). In the first generation of Feed the Future, the USG employed a unique, intensive approach to reaching

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<sup>38</sup> World Food Program, et al., (2017).

poverty reduction targets through a tailor-made plan to move each client household above the poverty line. Successful scaling of this model has relied on using GOH entities to implement it, and attracting commitments from the GOH to provide increasing levels of funding to reach more families. Going forward with GFSS, a broader-reaching approach based more explicitly on market systems facilitation should allow for further expansion of the number of beneficiaries.

Within the ZOI, the USG will pursue a systemic approach to ensure sustainable, broad-based improvements to food security. The USG will strengthen the capacity of institutions and market system actors to provide technical assistance and services to beneficiaries, and thus will transition away from provision of direct assistance. The USG will also seek to focus on inclusive poverty reduction by building capacity of market actors and institutions to provide services to marginalized groups, youth, women, and indigenous people. The USG will continue to explicitly target women as beneficiaries of the agricultural production and off-farm income programs from which they have traditionally been excluded. Many Feed the Future beneficiaries are indigenous, and many fit in the demographic of youth. Though past programming has been inclusive of these groups, it has not had an explicit strategy to target these groups and respond to their specific needs; this will change with a more intentional approach under this Country Plan.

The boundaries of the ZOI are not an absolute limit on where the USG will work. This GFSS country plan calls for increased work with companies and other actors outside the ZOI that can impact poverty and stunting within the ZOI (for instance agricultural processors in Comayagua or San Pedro Sula that purchase their raw material from western Honduras). In the same way, natural resource management interventions will occasionally stretch outside of the ZOI, as watershed boundaries don't align precisely with departmental boundaries. In both cases the focus remains on the poor within the ZOI, but with an understanding that sometimes the interventions best placed to improve lives within the ZOI will occur outside of the ZOI.

Many actors within the USG Interagency currently work and will continue to work on policy-level interventions of a national scale that contribute to food security and nutrition in the ZOI and in Honduras as a whole. The Economic and Political sections of the US Embassy, USDA and Commerce, as well as USAID anti-corruption programming, all work to improve the national business enabling environment in Honduras, to eliminate barriers to inclusive economic growth. As has long been recognized in Feed the Future, national-level policy work will be an important component for effecting change in the ZOI. Nonetheless, Population-Based Survey indicators will continue to be measured at the ZOI level.

#### *Targeted Value Chains:*

Based on the stocktaking analysis, stakeholder consultations, and results from Feed the Future interventions to date, the Country Plan will focus on two main value chains: coffee and horticulture (fruits and vegetables). Additionally, the Country Plan will diversify farmer incomes through small-scale animal production (including beekeeping), dairy, tree crops (like cacao), agricultural processing, and related off-farm enterprises.

Coffee is the backbone of the economy of the western highlands of Honduras. It is one of the most important sources of income for farmers, pickers, and local markets, which are stimulated by the annual infusion of coffee-related cash into the region. Analysis of the coffee sector indicates a strong opportunity for capturing more of the expanding specialty coffee market share worldwide.

Horticulture products have a diverse and growing market demand, particularly in national and regional markets. Horticulture crops have the highest return for the use of crop land, and their production creates demand for labor. The growth of this sector can create many income generation and agricultural employment opportunities, particularly for smallholders, women and youth. While horticulture is targeted mainly for its income-generation potential (hence supporting the agricultural income pathway to

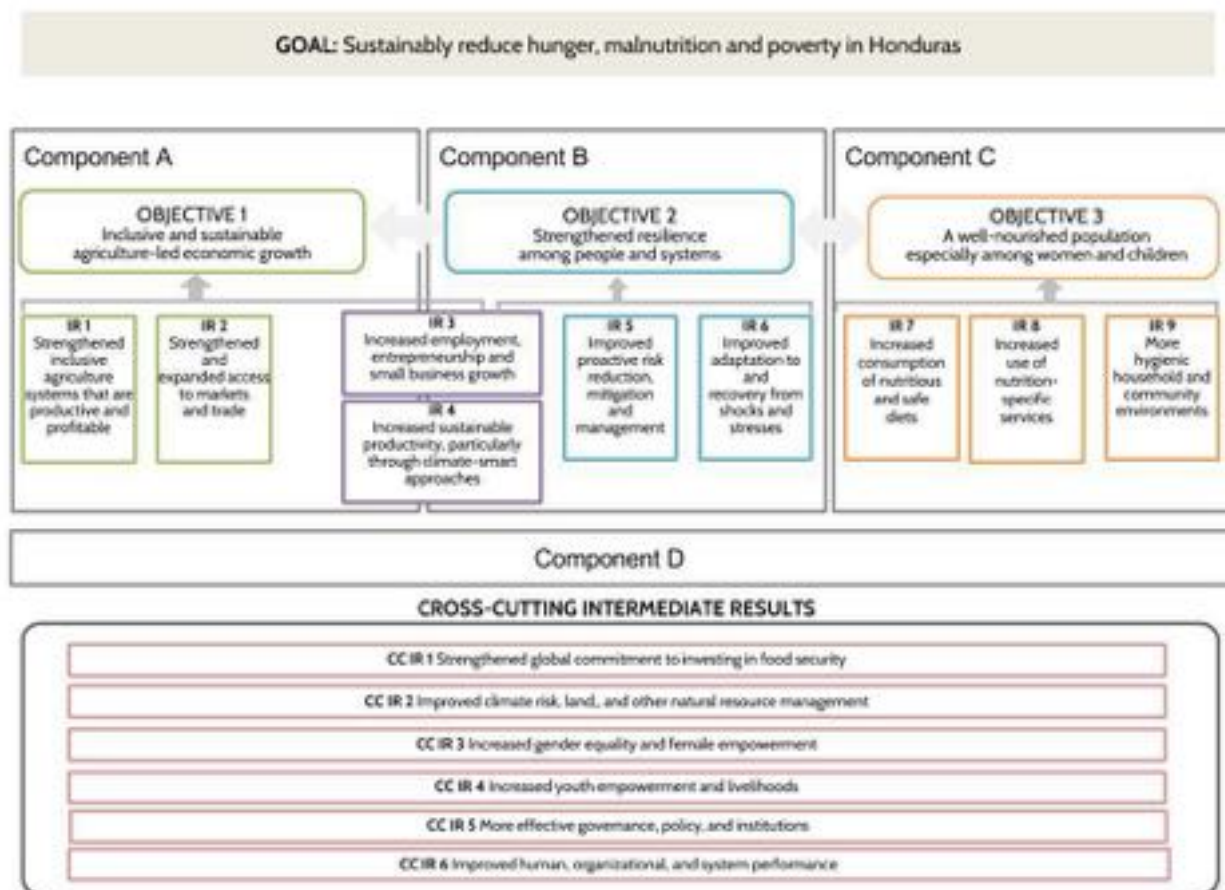
nutrition)<sup>39</sup>, many of these crops also comply with USAID’s definition of nutrient-rich value chains. The AIN-C and decentralized nutrition programs supported by the USG employ social and behavior change communication (SBCC) to increase home consumption of horticulture crops and Animal Source Foods.

### 3. Results Framework

The Program Components of the GFSS Country Plan for Honduras are based on the following objectives and associated intermediate results (IRs) drawn from the GFSS Results Framework:

1. Inclusive and sustainable agriculture-led economic growth (Program Component A)
2. Strengthened resilience among people and systems (Program Component B)
3. A well-nourished population, especially among women and children (Program Component C)

Policy interventions (Program Component D) will be cross-cutting across the three Objectives and will address barriers to inclusive economic growth, strengthen GOH systems for natural resource management and governance, and increase public and private investment for nutrition. Similarly, collaborating, learning, and adapting (CLA) will be integrated across the three Objectives and will include the funding of innovative technologies, research, evaluations, and other learning opportunities.



<sup>39</sup> For more on the different pathways linking agriculture and nutrition, see “Understanding and applying primary pathways and principles”, a brief published by the USAID SPRING activity in March 2014: [https://www.spring-nutrition.org/sites/default/files/publications/briefs/spring\\_understandingpathways\\_brief\\_1\\_0.pdf](https://www.spring-nutrition.org/sites/default/files/publications/briefs/spring_understandingpathways_brief_1_0.pdf)

### 3.1 Theory Of Change

***If the USG strengthens Honduran capacity (government, civil society, and the private sector) to advance economic growth, resilience, and nutrition at the household, systems, and policy levels, while collaborating with other development actors to constantly learn, innovate, and adapt to dynamic, changing realities, then hunger, malnutrition, and poverty will be sustainably reduced in western Honduras.***

In the present Results Framework, equal focus is placed on all three GFSS Objectives; the USG in Honduras is fully convinced of the necessity of economic growth, resilience, and nutrition to improving long-term food security. However, funding levels will differ between the Objectives, in part because progress is more costly to achieve in certain fields, and in part because available funding is higher for certain program elements. In particular, funding limitations may dictate that the USG's work on Objective 3 will have to consist largely of strategic support and alignment with the nutrition programming of other donors and the GOH, though Objectives 1 and 2 will incorporate nutrition sensitive activities (including water and sanitation interventions) where applicable and will align with the agriculture to nutrition pathways (including women's empowerment, income, production for own consumption, and increasing availability of affordable, diverse, nutritious food in markets)<sup>40</sup>.

The worldwide GFSS framework is arranged similarly to Development Objective 2 (DO2) in USAID/Honduras's current CDCS, "Extreme Poverty Sustainably Reduced for Vulnerable Populations in Western Honduras," which has three Intermediate Results (IRs) focused on resilience, economic growth, and nutrition, respectively.<sup>41</sup> This DO2 results framework has been effective at better integrating USAID interventions, and the Mission has gleaned many lessons in the process of implementing it. One such lesson is that it is best to bundle together interventions that are interdependent for their success (agricultural technical assistance depending on protection of watersheds, or decentralized nutrition work dependent on local governance activities, for instance).

The Honduras GFSS Country Plan works at multiple levels to address the three GFSS Objectives: the **household level** where market systems alone leave certain needs unmet; the **systems level** to facilitate market actors, local government, schools, civil society, and decentralized service providers to better advance economic growth, resilience, and nutrition in the ZOI; and the **national policy level** to maintain GOH commitment to food security and nutrition, thus improving long-term sustainability of investments in the ZOI and farther afield. In this way income and nutrition will be improved simultaneously through work with individuals, communities, and national government.

### 3.2 Strategic Transition

The interest of the GOH in assuming more responsibility for programs of social safety nets, decentralized provision of health and nutrition services, school feeding, improvement of rural infrastructure, and coordination of food security interventions, is a promising sign for eventual strategic transition of the country away from direct provision of services by foreign donors. However, Honduras will continue to depend on outside lenders and donors to fund many of these programs, even as the GOH increasingly oversees and implements the programs itself. Because of this, the road map for strategic transition in Honduras should entail the USG ensuring stable levels of funding to programs that favor food security and nutrition, but channeling this funding through national and local government, civil society, and private

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<sup>40</sup> For more on the different pathways linking agriculture and nutrition, see "Understanding and applying primary pathways and principles", a brief published by the USAID SPRING activity in March 2014: [https://www.spring-nutrition.org/sites/default/files/publications/briefs/spring\\_understandingpathways\\_brief\\_1\\_0.pdf](https://www.spring-nutrition.org/sites/default/files/publications/briefs/spring_understandingpathways_brief_1_0.pdf)

<sup>41</sup> USAID's DO2 corresponds to the Mission Objective 1.2 of the USG's Integrated Country Strategy for Honduras, which is couched under Mission Goal 1: "Sustainable economic growth reduces poverty, creates employment for Hondurans and Americans, and encourages Hondurans to build their futures in Honduras."



sector actors, as opposed to direct implementation by the USG. This transition to Honduran oversight and implementation of resources should be accompanied by increasing levels of own-source financing for programs, such that the stable USG contribution represents a smaller and smaller share of total program budgets. It also implies that the nature of USG support must change gradually but fundamentally, transitioning from direct provision of a given service (i.e. paying technicians to provide agricultural extension) to a light-touch facilitation of other actors to provide the service (i.e. training and providing supplies to improve effectiveness of health workers that are paid with GOH funds).

#### **4. Program Components**

Over the past 25 years, the USG in Honduras has provided assistance in the fields of nutrition education and community child health, agricultural finance, agricultural technical assistance, governance, environmental resilience, and local infrastructure. The current USAID CDCS, as well as the current GFSS country plan, are unique in their strategic combination and integration of these disparate components so they contribute to coherent food security gains and poverty reduction goals. This approach reflects learning by USAID/Honduras that different technical areas must work together as a cohesive, integrated program in order to maximize development results. Governance in a broad sense—management of natural resources, grouping of farmers to coordinate their production and marketing practices, coordination of social programs and other investments by municipalities, accountability of municipalities to civil society—plays a key role in such an approach, because it is the capacity to govern and organize their own affairs that will ultimately make local actors the protagonists of their development processes.

In the first generation of Feed the Future, USAID’s programming evolved from a single contract for almost all food security programming, to a combination of a G2G agreement and a contract, plus some smaller mechanisms. The next generation of investments, represented by this Country Plan, will aim to solidify the existing G2G work, while branching into facilitating provision of technical and financial services through support to farmer cooperatives, private sector companies, and rural savings and loan institutions (cajas rurales). In Feed the Future, the USG has proven capable of delivering improved food security outcomes for direct beneficiaries, but such a direct approach will not reach a large enough scale to have systemic impact across an entire region, nor is implementation by the USG a way to promote long-term sustainability of Honduran solutions to food insecurity.

Sustainability, including proper monitoring, beyond the life of the country plan will be achieved through further ownership and uptake of food security programs by the Government of Honduras, provision of services through market-driven actors, and interventions that strengthen the overall market system and enabling environment. Prospects for sustainability will also be improved through public-private partnerships and support to innovative food security practices developed by local NGOs and indigenous groups. Where appropriate, digital tools and technologies will be used to improve efficiencies across the agriculture and food system by enhancing information sharing, communications, and transactions, as well as payments between value chain actors.<sup>42</sup>

The Honduras GFSS country plan closely follows the existing USAID Development Objective 2 (Extreme Poverty Sustainably Reduced for Vulnerable Populations in Western Honduras), and as such will continue to leverage non-Feed the Future money to strengthen food security through promotion of non-agricultural value chains, business enabling environment, transparency, basic education, environmental conservation, and local governance processes.

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<sup>42</sup> For guidance and best practices on the use of digital technologies in agriculture, the GFSS Supplemental Technical Guide “Towards Digitally Enabled Global Agriculture and Food Systems” can be consulted: [https://feedthefuture.gov/sites/default/files/resource/files/GFSS\\_TechnicalGuidance\\_TowardsDigitallyEnabledFoodSystems.pdf](https://feedthefuture.gov/sites/default/files/resource/files/GFSS_TechnicalGuidance_TowardsDigitallyEnabledFoodSystems.pdf)

The Honduras GFSS Country Plan components are as follows, with the respective GFSS IRs each supports.

#### **4.1 Component A: Strengthening Select Value Chains and Market Systems**

*IR 1: Strengthened inclusive agriculture systems that are productive and profitable*

*IR 2: Strengthened and expanded access to markets and trade*

*IR 3: Increased employment and entrepreneurship*

*IR 4: Increased sustainable productivity, particularly through climate-smart approaches*

In order to sustainably generate new income opportunities for the poor and extreme poor, USG investments in Honduras will be based on a market-oriented approach to agricultural and income diversification. The USG has over 10 years of intensive experience in market-oriented agricultural diversification in Honduras that has proven to be an effective strategy for increasing incomes and employment opportunities for the rural poor. The current GFSS Country Plan will seek ways for a broad range of Honduran actors to promote the production and marketing practices that have proven effective at improving income for poor farmers.

The Country Plan will also focus on promoting resilient, well-functioning market systems and on working with key partners in the private and public sectors so they can assume leadership roles in the creation of jobs and self-employment opportunities.

- Technical assistance and market links for specific value chains: horticulture and coffee to support GFSS Objective 1 (Inclusive and Sustainable Agriculture-Led Economic Growth). The Country Plan will also diversify farmer incomes by supporting other activities such as: small-scale animal production, dairy, tree crops (cacao and avocado, for example), agricultural processing, and related off-farm enterprises. The USG will continue to link increased production to promising market channels by brokering relationships between producers and buyers, as well as offering all actors better access to price and other market information. Though improvement of nutrition through better agricultural incomes is the primary pathway for nutrition-sensitive agriculture employed by the USG in Honduras, many of the income-producing crops and animal products also allow for dietary diversification directly, both for home consumption of producer families, and for the local customers buying their food. (An interesting example is USDA's support to development and dissemination of new bean varieties with higher mineral content, in the course of a larger program to promote production and marketing of Honduran beans). This technical assistance will keep a firm eye on the potential of any recommended crop or practice to reduce poverty and stunting in the specific context of each household and community (available land, natural and human resources, local causes of malnutrition, market opportunities, etc.).
- A dense network of secondary and tertiary roads exists in western Honduras, but these are often impassable by vehicles due to a lack of regular maintenance, as well as a lack of key structures such as drainage canals, culverts, and paved fords. Previously, USAID funded GOH institutions to perform some of these maintenance and improvement interventions. Going forward, USAID will increasingly work to strengthen local companies and collectives to perform road maintenance, and enable municipal governments to plan, coordinate, and finance this maintenance. Lastly, the USG will coordinate with the CABEI's efforts to build trunk roads that link remote parts of western Honduras with promising markets in San Pedro Sula and Tegucigalpa, as well as to the Salvadoran and Guatemalan road networks.
- Given coffee's importance in the ZOI, the USG will continue to focus especially on the systemic issues facing this value chain, including reduction of production costs, improvement of coffee quality, improved marketing and farm gate pricing, self-sustaining technical assistance options, and long-term planning for transition of growers away from the crop in locations where current and future climate projections do not allow for the production of quality coffee. The USG will continue to promote the production and marketing practices that have proven effective at improving coffee farmer income over the past years of Feed the Future, but will increasingly seek self-sustaining ways for

other actors (groups of farmers, coffee processors, local and national government) to take the lead on technical assistance to end users.

- In both coffee and horticulture there exists a robust private sector that supplies national and export markets. However, the poorest farmers of western Honduras often do not reap the full benefits of these market opportunities, instead selling low-quality produce at a point low on the value chain. In horticulture, the USG will continue its existing work to group small producers together to improve their volumes, quality, and negotiating capacity, and link these groups to promising buyers, who are motivated to replace imports from Guatemala with Honduran produce. In coffee the USG has leveraged the growing interest of buyers in specialty and high-quality coffees, providing growers with tools and techniques to produce such higher-value coffee, and linking them to innovative coffee processors and exporters. In the future, USG work will also increasingly aim to link coffee enterprises to end markets in the US, Asia, and Europe, such that Honduran specialty coffee continues to grow, as opposed to representing a limited niche where any expansion by one actor must displace existing production.
- Feed the Future will work extensively with cooperatives, cajas rurales, and other existing market-driven groups, who will in turn service household beneficiaries by providing technical assistance in agricultural production, quality and food safety practices, processing, and marketing. These groups have been partners and beneficiaries of past Feed the Future programming, but the USG will now increasingly turn to them as implementers in their own right. This approach will strengthen market and government actors, allowing the USG to transition away from direct provision of technical assistance. USG programming will create capacity and opportunities for women, youth, and indigenous persons to act as leaders and influencers in these institutions and promote their inclusive and equitable management.
- Similarly, Feed the Future will expand recent work with agricultural vocational high schools, both as a way of training and involving youth in improved agricultural production for future employment and entrepreneurship, as well as potentially enlisting these schools and students as providers of technical assistance to other farmers. Working with high school students is an effective way to ensure that the next generation of farmers and technicians includes larger numbers of empowered young women.
- Irrigation is key to achieving the productivity level required for horticulture and other agriculture production to be competitive, efficient, meet market demand and mitigate risk, particularly risk of weather-related shocks. Under the Country Plan, the USG will continue to work with farmers who have installed irrigation under prior generations of Feed the Future programming, and will increase irrigation in areas with greater agricultural potential and water availability, actively seeking out women and youth as beneficiaries and managers of water systems. In some cases where rainwater harvest systems installed by the GOH or other donors exist, Feed the Future will seek to link farmer clients to these reservoirs via irrigation systems. USAID will also be training partners and stakeholders in sustainable rainwater harvesting practices developed through a Programmatic Environmental Assessment.
- Off-farm employment is key for increasing income and diversifying livelihood risk for women and youth in the ZOI. The USG will support the development of micro-, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) that add value or provide services to rural agriculture communities and help the sector move a step beyond primary agriculture production. USAID is currently undertaking a study on rural youth livelihoods that will help to better direct programming to reach youth, link them to jobs or entrepreneurship opportunities, and ultimately to make rural areas more desirable places to settle and raise a family. The larger focus on market systems development will allow the USG to find strategic intervention points for better integrating youth all along value chains.
- Many of the market actors that the USG will use to channel technical assistance will also provide financial products and services to small farmers and food enterprises (loans, triangulated schemes with buyers and suppliers, weather-based insurance, savings accounts, investment programs for remittances, etc.). The USG will serve as a facilitator to promote increased access to finance, especially for women household members. Digital financial services will be used, wherever possible,

to make savings, credit, and insurance options more affordable and/or accessible to small farmers and enterprises.

- Women continue to have less access to productive assets and training. Feed the Future strives to reverse exclusion of women through a number of methods. The USG will continue to carry out workshops on positive models of masculinity, both for implementing staff and for male and female beneficiaries. In response to growing awareness of gender-based violence (GBV) in the ZOI, USAID will continue to search for ways to deliver effective anti-GBV messaging throughout its programming, as well as ways of linking communities to services for GBV victims. Practical measures will be employed to improve inclusion of women in technical assistance centered on improving economic production (women already form the majority of beneficiaries of nutrition-focused programs). These measures include holding sessions at hours convenient for targeted groups, and arranging for services such as childcare or collective meal preparation that will enable women to combine household duties with attendance. The setting of targets for female participation in agricultural production training has been an effective way to increase participation, and may be expanded to cover staffing, access to finance, and commercial agreements established between farmers and companies. Collaboration with government, NGO, and market actors can be conditioned on their meeting specific levels of female inclusion in their staff and their client makeup. Women's empowerment is not only a way to foster agriculture-led economic growth, but also represents a pathway to better nutrition.
- The USG will continue its work to foster freer trade between Honduras and its neighbors, which are promising markets for Honduran farmers.

## **4.2 Component B: Strengthening the Capacity of People and Systems to Adapt to and Recover from Shocks and Stresses**

*IR 3: Increased employment and entrepreneurship*

*IR 4: Increased sustainable productivity, particularly through climate-smart approaches*

*IR 5: Improve proactive risk reduction, mitigation, and management*

*IR 6: Improve adaptation to and recovery from shocks and stresses*

Given the high level of livelihood dependence on natural resources in western Honduras, poverty reduction and sustainable growth can only be achieved when households, communities, and local governments sustainably use their natural resources and their social capital to become more resilient and more adaptive to changes in economic and climatic conditions.

- Support to livelihood diversification (agroforestry, off-farm enterprises, and animal production), as well as to staples such as corn and beans that are not high value but are crucial for subsistence, will improve resilience at the household level. Corn, beans, and horticulture prosper or suffer from climatic conditions similar to one another, but pests that affect one species tend not to affect the others. Coffee, fruits, and other tree crops can weather drought and other single-year shocks better than the aforementioned annual species. Livestock offers short-term, constant production such as honey, milk, and eggs, as well as a vehicle for savings and sale of animals when unexpected situations require a large amount of cash. A mix of produce destined for different markets (some local, some national, some regional, and some global), crops and animal products for home consumption, long-term and quick-turnaround investments, and income sources entirely decoupled from climatic conditions, all make for a robust strategy for ensuring income and survival. This livelihood diversification strategy has been a hallmark of past Feed the Future programming, but a more nuanced understanding of how different value chains may or may not offer potential for short-term increases in income or nutrition will allow future implementation to more consciously promote different value chains for different purposes.
- Many of the farming practices currently promoted by the USG represent no-risk investments that

both improve current productivity and reduce risk to future shocks and stresses. Examples include liming soils, terracing or contouring hillsides, drip irrigation, and conservation of organic mulch on the soil surface. In a similar fashion, improving farmer access to market price information, and helping farmers to enter into more direct relationships with buyers (i.e. selling to US coffee roasters instead of Honduran bulk exporters) can remove some of the price volatility risk of undifferentiated commodity markets. In future programming, some specific practices may offer opportunities to enlist value chain actors to widely promote simple, high-impact farming techniques that can rapidly improve farmer productivity and incomes at a low cost to the USG.

- The USG will place a priority on improving watershed management for the existing and new irrigation systems installed under Feed the Future and other donor and GOH efforts. The goal is that, by the end of the life of the GFSS Country Plan, all USAID-assisted farmers in western Honduras that are linked to irrigation systems will have robust, inclusive, and equitable local governance structures for protecting and sustainably managing the micro-watersheds from which they receive water (water boards, irrigation boards, municipal environmental authorities, compensation for environmental services, micro-watershed management plans and budgets, etc.). Many water capture systems supported by the USG as well as the EU, the GOH, and other actors, were originally conceived for irrigation, but in communities where clean drinking water is scarce, the local governance structures prioritized household use and modified design accordingly, creating either single-use potable water systems, or dual-use systems with household consumption as the first priority. Such potable water systems contribute directly to health and nutrition, and the USG will also continue to provide support (and to coordinate with existing support from other sources) to watershed management for these systems. Watershed management entails a number of holistic components that promote health and sanitation, and hence nutrition. These range from exclusion of livestock (and their feces) from water recharge areas upstream, to proper use, rinsing, and disposal of pesticides, to social behavior change communication around proper hygiene (hand-washing, latrines, washing of dishes, household drainage, etc.).
- The USG will continue to support monitoring of weather and agroclimatic conditions to enable farmers to make better production decisions (including water use) from month to month and year to year.
- The USG will continue work in natural resource management and conservation, expanding beyond the local level of micro-watersheds to achieve a sustainable landscape approach. This work will cover biologically-sensitive ecosystems and private nature reserves in order to reduce threats to biodiversity and increase ecological integrity. Restoring degraded lands and water resources, as well as promoting sustainable management practices, can increase productivity and strengthen resilience. USG efforts encompass both local and national levels, strengthening national legal and institutional structures to empower local communities in the ZOI to manage their own resources.
- The USG will consult existing models and develop new ones where needed to map future climatic conditions in the ZOI, through 2030 and beyond. This will enable a more realistic, farsighted vision of where specific crops and value chains will continue to offer solutions to reduce poverty and stunting, where new crops will become necessary, and where agriculture and possibly even continued human habitation will no longer be viable. In the past seven years, the USG has seen many examples of communities where a specific crop, especially coffee, is no longer a wise choice for families to base their livelihoods on. The current Country Plan will remain vigilant to ensure that the USG is not promoting livelihood options without a future.
- Cajas rurales promote resilience not only by pooling community resources for finance and weathering economic shocks, but also for the social capital they represent. Cajas rurales serve as a natural organizing unit for assembling produce, collective marketing, receiving technical assistance, and even for working out disputes and solutions to shared problems. The USG has long worked with cajas rurales in many beneficiary communities, but in the future will increasingly empower them and employ them as implementers of technical assistance for their members. This will further contribute to long-term resilience in communities, as improved social capital will improve community cohesion

and mutual support to weather, mitigate, and adapt to shocks and stresses. USG support must involve conditions to increase female representation in cajas rurales and their governing boards, which are often dominated by men.

- Non-Feed the Future funding will be leveraged to carry out necessary work on local governance and market systems in order to improve the business enabling environment (BEE), as well as to develop value-added and off-farm options for the poor in western Honduras. This is a response to the increasing realization that agriculture is just one part of the income and employment story. By moving into non-agricultural livelihoods with lower or less direct exposure to climate risks, households can significantly reduce their livelihood risk. USAID's highly integrated CDCS, and tight collaboration between all interagency actors, readily allows the USG to do this cross-sectoral work.

### 4.3 Component C: Increasing Access to Diverse and Nutritious Foods

*IR 7: Increased consumption of nutritious and safe diets*

*IR 8: Increased use of direct nutrition interventions and services*

*IR 9: More hygienic household and community environments*

Evidence shows that proper nutrition throughout the human life cycle, but especially during the 1,000 day window from the start of pregnancy to a child's second birthday, can significantly reduce the human and economic burden of diseases, reduce infant mortality, reduce the risk for developing non-communicable diseases and other chronic conditions later in life, and improve an individual's educational achievement and earning potential. Although progress has been made in reducing undernutrition in Honduras, significant work remains. Information from Feed the Future baseline surveys and the most recent DHS survey (2011-2012) demonstrates that stunting, a marker of suboptimal provision of foods and health services, is still serious in the departments of western Honduras.

- Feed the Future in Honduras has successfully combined livelihoods programming to increase incomes, with parallel nutrition-specific work supporting the GOH's AIN-C network of community health volunteers. AIN-C volunteers are made more effective at measuring and documenting child growth, and are given the knowledge necessary for follow-up home visits and counseling of families with undernourished children. By packaging livelihoods programming with nutrition-specific interventions, the USG has effectively created an integrated nutrition-sensitive approach. This approach addresses both income and consumption-linked pathways to nutrition,<sup>43</sup> ensuring that new income is used to improve nutrition and not to buy larger amounts of micronutrient-poor foods (in other words, the goal is for families to use higher incomes to buy fruits, vegetables, and Animal Source Food such as eggs, dairy products, meat, and fish, and not potato chips, alcohol, and soft drinks).
- AIN-C volunteers and Feed the Future technicians also deliver unified SBCC messaging on nutrition, water, sanitation, and hygiene, family planning, women's empowerment, household decision-making, and domestic violence, while linking families to programs funded by the GOH and other donors to make household improvements such as cement floors, latrines, efficient stoves, skylights, in-house water faucets, water filters, and exclusion of animals.
- Nutrition Education Centers (CENs) have been installed in many communities using USG, private sector, or local government funding, as one way to increase the effectiveness of AIN-C volunteers and other community health workers. CENs are often linked to rural schools; they consist of a safe food preparation (i.e. food safety) area with utensils, and a dining/learning area. They serve as a

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<sup>43</sup> For more on the different pathways linking agriculture and nutrition, see "Understanding and applying primary pathways and principles", a brief published by the USAID SPRING activity in March 2014: [https://www.spring-nutrition.org/sites/default/files/publications/briefs/spring\\_understandingpathways\\_brief\\_1\\_0.pdf](https://www.spring-nutrition.org/sites/default/files/publications/briefs/spring_understandingpathways_brief_1_0.pdf)

meeting place for group training on healthy eating, dietary diversity, weaning foods, and meal preparation, which is part of the follow-up offered to families with undernourished children. Families learn how to prepare new versions of traditional foods like porridge and tortillas, fortified with locally-available produce that they learn to grow on private or shared garden plots.

- Involving men in their children's nutrition and medical monitoring is a challenge in western Honduras; childcare, health, and nutrition are often regarded as women's domains. However, USAID has begun to study the cases of certain communities with male AIN-C volunteers, as well as high participation of fathers in CEN learning and cooking sessions, to apply lessons in male inclusion across the ZOI. To this end, CENs will continue to be a key way to bring nutrition (and household hygiene, and family planning) to the forefront of USG technical assistance, but will also expand their offerings to train men and women on new farming practices and positive models of masculinity. Where feasible, CENs will be linked to local procurement chains for the school feeding programs (promoted by the GOH, USDA, and WFP). Such links between agricultural production and nutrition can serve as practical measures to integrate men into childcare and nutrition, effectively reducing the cultural barriers that exist between "male" and "female" spaces.
- The USG approach has served as a model for the GOH as to how to improve and make more effective the existing AIN-C volunteer network, as well as the use of CENs as a way to coordinate and focus national and municipal work on nutrition. However, it is clear that direct implementation of nutrition-specific work by the USG has a limited reach and is ultimately less sustainable than work coordinated by the GOH. Luckily, the GOH is dedicating increasing levels of own-source funding, as well as loans from the IDB, to expanding coverage of decentralized health providers (which are usually mancomunidades administered by the municipal governments in a given geographic area). The USG has been supporting these decentralized health providers by offering training, equipment, and supplies so that nutrition and health technicians improve their ability to deliver integrated nutrition monitoring, counseling, and follow-up for children under five and their families. Such systemic support will continue, with tighter collaboration and leveraging with the IDB and the GOH, who administer and fund these health providers.
- USG work in national food safety systems will continue to be important not only for maintaining links to exacting markets regionally and abroad, but also for reducing the burden of food-related illness in Honduras, which has a direct impact on child nutrition.
- A new nutrition-sensitive approach at the more systemic level will be to develop and facilitate value chains such as fortified foods and healthy processed snacks, or to link organized groups of school buyers and farmer producers around the school feeding program. Animal production is another value chain that can supply both producers and their neighbors with nutrient-dense foods.
- McGovern-Dole Food for Education programs will continue to support the GOH's nationwide school feeding strategy, by providing meals and academic support to children in Intibucá department, as well as creating groups of parents trained in improved nutritional practices, who become responsible for preparation of school meals. The USG will continue to promote purchase of local produce by school feeding programs, as a way of diversifying diet for school-age children and creating new market opportunities for motivated producers. While school feeding does not directly reach Feed the Future's core under-two demographic, it promotes physical wellbeing, education, and healthy eating habits for children and adolescents (as well as their parents, who often have younger children as well). Many of these youth will be raising the next generation of infants within a few years. Hence school feeding serves a long-term, generation-spanning goal of improved under-two nutrition.

#### **4.4 Component D: Advancing Country Leadership through Policy Systems**

- USDA will continue to strengthen institutional and planning capacity in the Ministry of Agriculture (SAG) to fulfill SAG's mandate in a number of areas, including: coordination of all the public and private actors in specific value chains, support to establishment and legal compliance of agribusiness microenterprises, agroclimatic monitoring, enforcement of and training in sanitary and phytosanitary

measures, as well as strengthening its market information system (SIMPAH/INFOAGRO). All of USDA's support to SAG serves to increase agricultural production and income in Honduras, improve food safety (including animal and plant health systems), add value, and link producers to markets. USAID will also seek to strengthen GOH partners like SAG, SEDIS (the social safety net program), SESAL (the Health Ministry), COPECO (the disaster response authority), MiAmbiente (the Ministry of Environment), and IHCAFE (the public-private national coffee institute). This support for transparent public administration and accountability may be performed through a dedicated activity, or through non-agriculture funded activities in the mission, as opportunities arise. Some policy needs may initially be covered by existing mechanisms working on market systems development and local governance.

- Direct engagement on policy priorities identified by the GFSS policy analysis, including: import of high-quality inputs; access to finance; customs, borders and trade; infrastructure; energy; the new tax law's effect on small producers; and business registration. The Economic and Political sections of the Embassy are particularly important contributors to this direct engagement. Department of Commerce has dedicated programs for facilitation of rural micro-grids and trade that will have a positive impact on rural livelihoods.
- As with the other components, the extent of nutrition-specific work that is possible will be contingent on the availability of explicit nutrition funding. Any USG nutrition work in Honduras will align, support, and complement the Government of Honduras with policy, regulation, and/or surveillance, as appropriate. As the mission work evolves with Feed the Future, our plan is to support GOH surveillance systems, where appropriate, to help diagnose and address agriculture and nutrition issues/problems across the country.
- Coordination with and possible program support for the EU, Canadian cooperation, the GOH, and the Inter-American Development Bank, for their ongoing programs for decentralization of nutrition and agricultural extension services.
- Continued capacity building for the national risk management system (SINAGER), which includes GOH entities, local committees, and civil society.

#### **4.5 Collaborating, Learning and Adapting**

Collaboration, Learning, and Adapting will be integrated throughout the four components of the Country Plan. The consultations, workshops, interviews, and studies undertaken to develop this country plan will be institutionalized going forward and captured in a regularly updated "stocktaking document". The stocktaking document and the present country plan are to be living documents that continuously inform the USG approach to food security in Honduras.

The USG will promote learning among other actors in Honduras by funding innovative local food security initiatives that contribute to the GFSS goals. These could include microfinance, renewable energy, female and youth empowerment, seed saving, and other areas. USAID will also set aside funds for possible funding of Public Private Partnerships, Public International Organizations, Development Credit Authority, or trilateral cooperation. This will allow flexibility in responding to unforeseen circumstances and opportunities, or covering gaps in programming as they are identified. It will also allow the USG to experiment with new and varied implementation mechanisms. Such flexibility will represent a space for heightened Interagency involvement in identifying and developing innovative intervention areas.

#### **5. Stakeholder Engagement Platforms**

Under the present GFSS country plan for Honduras, the USG will continue to ensure frequent consultation and collaboration, both within the Interagency, as well as with non-USG stakeholders relevant to food security.



- USDA, Commerce, and USAID attend the bi-weekly meeting convened by Economic section of the State Department. As the lead agency on the GFSS, USAID offers regular updates and summaries of relevant food security issues in Honduras. This Economic meeting has proven to be the most relevant forum for Interagency collaboration on all matters relating to economic growth, including the GFSS.
- Different USG agencies also schedule ad hoc meetings with outside actors and co-design new interventions as specific opportunities arise for fruitful collaboration around food security. The EU is a particularly important player in food security, nutrition, and decentralized governance and service provision in western Honduras, and the USG consults frequently and collaborates constantly with them in both field implementation and strategic planning. This offers USG expertise in agricultural extension to the EU, while allowing the USG to leverage greater EU investment in nutrition services.
- The USG participates in regular meetings of the Food Security and Nutrition technical roundtable of the G16 donor group, which brings together the World Bank, IDB, CABEL, the European Union, FAO, WFP, Canadian cooperation, AECID (The Spanish Agency for International Cooperation for Development), and Japanese cooperation. USAID is the rotating chair of this roundtable through mid-2018 (in collaboration with UTSAN, the permanent co-chair), and is expanding participation to include the USG Interagency, as well as smaller donors like Mexico and Taiwan.
- The USG is a member of the GOH's COTISAN (Interdisciplinary Technical Committee on Food Security and Nutrition), chaired by UTSAN and the main official conduit for food security-centered communication between the GOH, donors, and civil society.
- The USG also participates in the Executive and Technical Committees of ACS. This is the GOH-led forum for coordination between the different actors that contribute to the Dry Corridor Alliance Initiative. The USG encourages the GOH to maintain momentum by regularly convening COTISAN and ACS meetings.

Two civil society-led platforms in which the USG will explore the possibility of participating are as follows:

- Asociación Voz para el Cambio, a platform of civil society NGOs supported by Dutch cooperation and IFPRI that aims to influence public policy around food security and nutrition in Honduras.
- Regional food security and nutrition roundtables. These roundtables are part of the official GOH hierarchy of platforms for public consultation of policies, under the decentralization directives laid out in the GOH Country Plan and Vision 2010-2038.<sup>44</sup> These roundtables have been revitalized by UTSAN, and serve as a central meeting place and food security planning platform for representatives of local government, mancomunidades (regional groupings of mayors and municipal technical staff), civil society, and the private sector.

Again as part of the CLA approach discussed in Section D, USAID/Honduras will continue the habit of scheduling interviews and field workshops with organizations, individuals, and communities; bilateral donor meetings and joint field visits; and ad hoc consultations with government, the private sector, and civil society. A major takeaway of the stocktaking and information gathering processes undertaken for the current GFSS country plan is that such wide consultation should occur continuously as a way of constantly updating and adapting the strategy to complex and changing dynamics at the national and local levels. One of the first such actions under the new GFSS country plan will consist of a presentation and socialization of the plan itself to the numerous entities and communities consulted during its drafting.

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<sup>44</sup> <http://www.sefin.gob.hn/?p=284>

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## U.S. Government Interagency Partners

