



June 15, 2020

The Honorable John Hoeven, Chairman
Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural Development, Food
and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Jeff Merkley, Ranking Member
Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural Development, Food
and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Hoeven and Ranking Member Merkley:

On behalf of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' Committees on Domestic Justice and Human Development and International Justice and Peace, Catholic Charities USA, Catholic Relief Services and Catholic Rural Life, we wish to address the moral and human dimensions of the FY 2021 Agriculture Appropriations legislation. As our nation faces an unprecedented health and economic crisis, it remains vital to safeguard the well-being of our families and communities. Due to the health and economic consequences of the global pandemic, we have seen an increase in need in our parishes and our charities, pointing to the importance of sustained support for effective nutrition and development programs. The nation's priorities should include robust funding for both domestic and international food aid, support for family farms, and conservation and rural development programs, in a manner that complements community efforts and supports the family unit. Many of these program areas have already been subject to reductions over time. Additional cuts would further jeopardize vulnerable people and communities.

In a pastoral reflection, [*For I Was Hungry and You Gave Me Food*](#), the U.S. bishops wrote, "The primary goals of agricultural policies should be providing food for all people and reducing poverty among farmers and farm workers in this country and abroad." Adequate nutrition is essential to protect human life and dignity. We must also promote good stewardship of the land and natural resources and provide needed support to struggling farmers and ranchers. In our soup kitchens and food pantries, in our development work overseas, we see the faces of poor and hungry people every day. As a faith community, we feed those without work, pregnant women and children, and seniors on limited incomes across the globe. With over 37 million people living in food insecure households in the U.S. before the COVID-19 pandemic, and sharp increases since it began, the following programs are vital to provide essential nutrition to those most in need:

Women, Infants, and Children (WIC): Fully fund the WIC nutrition program ensuring that all families in need have access to life saving nutritional and health services. Provide investments to ensure program operations can respond adequately to changes in the economy and rising caseloads and food costs.

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP): We urge you to ensure adequate funds for SNAP and to fully fund state education and training programs. Investment in SNAP ensures those in need of food assistance have access to critical programs while adequately funding state education and training programs, including case management to help low-income families find work and self-sufficiency.

The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) and Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP): Provide full funding levels as required by the 2018 Farm Bill for these programs. The TEFAP program is the backstop for food security in communities across the country, providing roughly 20% of food distributed by local hunger-relief organizations. The CSFP helps to ensure adequate food assistance is provided to the growing population of low-income seniors. Faith communities and other charities are essential in providing food packages to hungry seniors in their local communities and are critical partners in the TEFAP program.

Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP): For 50 years CACFP has supplemented the diets of vulnerable Americans by providing nutritious meals and snacks. It is imperative to increase funding for CACFP to continue

supporting the health and wellness of the over 4 million Americans served by this program.

Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP): Provide robust funding for CSP to help farmers better conserve and care for farm land for future generations. Strong conservation programs are necessary to promote good stewardship of creation and provide needed support to family farms.

Local Agriculture Market Program (LAMP): Maintain 2018 Farm Bill mandatory funding for LAMP to expand access to local fresh and nutritious food. LAMP also helps farmers and ranchers start new farm and food-related businesses to increase rural economic opportunity and help rural communities thrive.

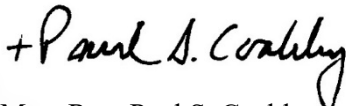
International Food Assistance: The Administration has proposed cutting all funding for the Food for Peace, McGovern-Dole Food for Education, and Food for Progress programs. We strongly oppose this decision and ask that Congress maintain their support for these programs. Such cuts come at a time of unparalleled need related to impacts from COVID-19, desert locusts, conflict, natural disasters, and other crises. Food assistance saves and improves the lives of millions of people each year, including the estimated 113 million who will need emergency food assistance this year in South Sudan, Yemen, countries in the Sahel, and Guatemala and Honduras. Cutting funding for these programs puts lives at risk, undermines progress towards reducing extreme poverty, harms U.S. interests, and may lead to a more unstable world. Given the uptick in projected needs in 2021, we ask Congress to increase funding to Food for Peace to \$2 billion in FY 2021 and McGovern-Dole to \$235 million. Furthermore, Food for Progress does not have a line-item in the appropriations bill; in light of the Administration's proposal, we ask that Congress provide explicit support for the continuation of this program.

Food for Peace Non-Emergency: Development Food Security Awards (DFSAs) build resilience, strengthen agricultural capacity, and improve livelihoods for the most vulnerable, reducing the need to provide future emergency assistance. Non-emergency funding also supports the Farmer-to-Farmer program, which matches volunteer U.S. farming and agriculture experts with development programs overseas. Pursuant to the 2018 Farm Bill, a minimum of \$365 million of Food for Peace funding should go to non-emergency programs, though additional funding could be allocated for this purpose. We ask that you support at least the minimum funding level for non-emergency programs in the FY 2021 appropriations with clear direction that at least \$350 million be used for DFSAs.

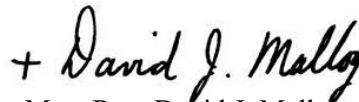
Rural Housing: Support rural residents by preserving affordable rural rental housing through adequate funding for Section 514 and 515 programs and the Multifamily Preservation and Revitalization Demonstration. Ensure that sufficient rental assistance and rural housing vouchers are available to keep these units affordable to rural workers and families.

Thank you for your consideration and efforts to protect and fund such programs that support families, feed hungry people, help the most vulnerable farmers, strengthen rural communities, and promote good stewardship of God's creation.

Sincerely yours,



Most Rev. Paul S. Coakley
Archbishop of Oklahoma City
Chairman, Committee on Domestic Justice
and Human Development



Most Rev. David J. Malloy
Bishop of Rockford
Chairman, Committee on International Justice
and Peace



Sr. Donna Markham, OP, Ph.D.
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Catholic Charities USA



Mr. Sean Callahan
President
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Mr. James Ennis
Executive Director
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