

January 26, 2017

President Donald J. Trump
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

The United States has spent more than 60 years as the global leader in saving and improving lives around the world, using in-kind donations of American-grown commodities through U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) programs. The U.S. has been able to proudly serve this role thanks to the abundance of safe, affordable, and nutritious food grown by American farmers. This mutually beneficial approach to international food assistance has allowed the U.S. to reach more than three billion people in over 150 countries.

Despite this impressive, proven record, the statute requiring a portion of aid be provided via in-kind donations has been relentlessly attacked by previous administrations and a small faction within Congress who would prefer to shift contributions from in-kind, American-grown food, to cash and vouchers. While we understand that cash and vouchers may serve a limited role in certain emergency situations, American-grown commodities should remain the backbone of the USDA and USAID food assistance programs.

The nonpartisan Government Accountability Office recently published a report calling into question the effectiveness and transparency of the USAID cash-based assistance programs. The report noted weaknesses in financial oversight, an inability to measure impacts on local markets, as well as USAID's general lack of information by which to evaluate the effectiveness of the programs relative to in-kind food aid projects. Sending taxpayer dollars overseas with minimal and questionable oversight has demonstrated an irresponsible approach to international food assistance that opens the programs up for increased fraud and abuse.

As a strong supporter of rural America and leader that touts the importance and patriotism of quality, American products, we ask you to prioritize the use of American-grown in-kind commodity contributions through U.S. international food assistance programs.

Without food security, countries cannot achieve widespread economic or political stability and their citizens will struggle to survive, develop, and participate in a productive world economy. U.S. farmers are proud to be part of the strong agricultural sector that feeds our nation and allows us to share our bounty with the world. We play an important role in not only improving, but saving the lives of those in need, both domestically and abroad.

The U.S. agriculture community looks forward to working with you to maintain and strengthen the role that U.S. farmers play in ensuring global food security.

Sincerely,

American Farm Bureau Federation
National Association of Wheat Growers
National Corn Growers Association
National Potato Council
National Sorghum Producers
North American Millers' Association
U.S. Dry Bean Council
U.S. Wheat Associates
USA Dry Pea and Lentil Council
USA Rice