



Feed the Future Country Fact Sheet

Online Version: <https://feedthefuture.gov/article/ten-things-i-about-feed-future>

Ten Things I Like About Feed the Future



Olivier Asselin

Mariam Hamidou Athie examines a pepper from her family garden in Senegal.

*The United States has always been a world leader in the fight to end hunger and poverty. This spring, our partners share how **recent efforts embody the best of the United States** and why this leadership matters. The following is a guest post authored by John Coonrod, the executive vice president of The Hunger Project, a global nonprofit committed to the sustainable end of world hunger.*

Progress for farmers living in poverty has been a long time coming.

I joined the staff of **The Hunger Project** 30 years ago at the height of the African famine. The following year, I had the opportunity of participating in the historic UN Special Session on Africa. African nations and the donors committed to dramatically ramp up funding for agriculture to avoid future famines.

We were all tremendously optimistic.

As we now know, the opposite occurred. The end of the Cold War, complex humanitarian emergencies, the global AIDS epidemic, and other priorities took the world's attention and budgets. Investments in agriculture declined steadily for another 25 years - until the bold announcement by President Obama at the 2012 G8 Summit in L'Aquila, Italy: The United States would change course and increase its own investment and commitment to agriculture. But it wouldn't do it alone - President Obama called on the rest of the world to join us.

This U.S. commitment led to Feed the Future, the U.S. Government's global hunger and food security initiative, which embodied a new way of doing development - a shift, as President Obama said, from "patronage to partnership."

Here's my list of 10 reasons why I like this approach:

1. Money

Feed the Future represents our nation's political and financial leadership within the G7 and G20 to reverse the global decline in investment in agriculture. Although The Hunger Project has not received any Feed the Future funds, we benefit indirectly by working in seven Feed the Future countries where the general activity level for empowering farmers has increased, and where we are now able to leverage our investments through greater coordination with Feed the Future activities in the area.

2. Whole of Government

I was lucky enough to be invited to several planning meetings at the U.S. Department of State and saw how then-Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton brought myriad government agencies and civil society to the table to formulate Feed the Future, creating not only ownership among the groups but a stronger commitment to small-scale producers than originally proposed.

3. Poverty Focus

Most of world's poor and hungry are food producers. Recognizing this, Feed the Future has taken a "smallholder first" approach to help these small-scale producers and their families escape poverty and, as they do, feed themselves and the world.

4. Gender Focus

The majority of small-scale producers who feed our world are women. Feed the Future employed some of the country's best minds on women's rights to draft its policies to overcome the tremendous inequalities that hold back progress.

5. Impact for Women

Feed the Future partnered with the International Food Policy Research Institute and Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative to develop the multidimensional [Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index](#) - a historic step to get beyond outputs to real impact for women. Many organizations are working to adopt it and The Hunger Project is testing a [simplified, community-level version](#).

6. Transparency

Feed the Future publishes annual [progress reports](#), which I and my civil society colleagues use to hold the initiative's lead agency, USAID's, feet to the fire - particularly on gender, which the 2013 progress report highlighted as an area of "uneven success."

7. Nutrition

Feed the Future courageously takes up one of the most complex developmental challenges - reducing stunting, a goal that requires progress not merely in food production but also in sectors ranging from health care and sanitation to halting child marriage.

8. Baby Steps Toward Integration

Our field experience and [recent evidence](#) (pdf) shows that women, in particular, cannot lift themselves out of poverty unless they have access to a comprehensive, well-governed set of community-level public services. This requires a highly integrated approach. This is no small task, in a business where many projects are in silos. Feed the Future has begun encouraging more integration.

9. Bipartisan Support

Exit polling after the 2010 elections showed that despite the financial crisis, 72 percent of Americans supported aid for feeding hungry children around the world. Perhaps more surprisingly, 76 percent supported helping poor farmers to feed themselves. Public support doesn't always translate into Congressional support, but with passionate commitment and respectful engagement from leaders like those at Feed the Future, ending world hunger has found strong champions in Congress.

10. Sustaining Momentum

We NGOs have long encouraged U.S. leadership to strengthen global food security and nutrition and we welcome the approach that Feed the Future is taking to achieve this. A **bill** has been introduced that would sustain U.S. efforts in the global fight to end world hunger.

As the world finalizes the post-2015 sustainable development agenda with promises to end hunger and extreme poverty by 2030, Feed the Future has placed the bets of the most powerful nation on earth squarely behind the hard-working, small-scale producers of our world, especially women.

If we double down on this particular bet, a healthier and more just world for all can become a reality.

More from This Series:

- [Here's What Happens When Global Hunger Meets American Ingenuity](#)
- [Hope for Ending Hunger](#)
- [How a Global Trip Inspired This Californian to Focus Locally](#)
- [U.S. Company Helps Smallholder Farmers Fight Hunger Abroad](#)