

*[As delivered]*

## **United States Intervention at 40<sup>th</sup> FAO Conference**

*Remarks by Jason Hafemeister,  
Acting Deputy Under Secretary for Farm and Foreign Agricultural Affairs  
U.S. Department of Agriculture  
to the FAO Conference, July 3, 2017*

Mr Chairman, Director-General Graziano da Silva, distinguished colleagues and guests, thank you for the opportunity to address you today. It is an honor and a pleasure to join my colleagues from all over the world as we work together to address global food insecurity at this 40<sup>th</sup> Conference of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations.

This year we face challenges that reinforce just how vulnerable much of the world remains to the threat of food insecurity. Famine and near famine conditions are impacting millions in Somalia, northeast Nigeria, Yemen and South Sudan. The United States has provided nearly \$1.2 billion in 2017 for humanitarian assistance in these four countries. In addition, the fall armyworm infestation is threatening the livelihoods of farmers throughout Sub-Saharan Africa.

Humanitarian assistance alone is not enough. The world must bridge the gap between humanitarian and development assistance, while also sustaining our long-term efforts to eliminate hunger and malnutrition. The Rome-based agencies are critical to filling this gap. The United States remains firmly committed to combatting poverty, food insecurity and malnutrition, improving agricultural productivity, expanding opportunities for rural economic growth, and bettering the lives of families around the world. Thus, the United States stands ready to work together with FAO and its members to promote the common interests that we share.

These shared interests include the work of Codex and the International Plant Protection Convention, combating animal and plant diseases, conserving water and natural resources, promoting innovations in agricultural production, building linkages between rural and urban areas, promoting nutrition, and eradicating world hunger. FAO plays an important role in these areas, and only together can we achieve global food security.

Last year the U.S. Congress passed the Global Food Security Act, confirming the U.S. commitment to tackling hunger and malnutrition. The U.S. Global Food Security Strategy, which was developed in response to this legislation, promotes inclusive and sustainable agricultural-led economic growth, strengthens resilience among people and systems to increasingly frequent and intense shocks and stresses, supports a well-nourished populations, especially among women and children.

At the United States Department of Agriculture, we are tasked with ensuring the health and security of American farms and forests, rural communities, and food systems, as well as promoting fair and open trade and food security. The U.S. approach to food security can best be described as “multifaceted.”

We have a long history of contributing to global food security and nutrition through our international capacity building and development programs, basic and applied research programs, data and information sharing, and the promotion of science-based policies and regulations that expand agricultural markets and trade.

Our approach is predicated on the fact that direct food aid alone is not enough. We support innovation that sustainably intensifies food and agricultural production and improves farm livelihoods. We support risk management and information sharing that allows farmers worldwide to adapt to political, economic, and natural crises. And we support global participation in open and efficient food and agricultural markets.

Food security can only be advanced through improved agricultural productivity in-country, as well as through international trade. As Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue has said, food is a noble thing to trade.

We in this room pursue global food security because it’s good for domestic agriculture and good for the world. As countries become more food secure and global incomes increase, that helps expand markets and increases opportunities for agriculture producers.

We also pursue global food security because it’s important to national security. We need only look to places like the four countries facing imminent famine threats right now to understand that conflict and strife can directly affect production of food and the access to available, affordable food. Thus, efforts to promote efficient, resilient global food and agriculture systems are of fundamental importance for global economic stability.

While the United States is one of the largest providers of food assistance, it is also one of the largest providers of development assistance. We believe that agricultural trade, investment, and innovation are crucial to economic development and to addressing poverty and hunger, and are important vehicles to help us address the goals of the 2030 Agenda.

That is why the United States works directly with developing countries to facilitate their integration into international organizations and global trading systems, for instance by helping them establish science-based regulatory systems and adopt international standards and by encouraging their participation in invaluable international standard-setting organizations such as Codex, the International Plant Protection Convention, and the World Organization for Animal

Health.

With the four crises, and one in nine people globally suffering from chronic undernourishment, the role of FAO in eradicating food insecurity remains pertinent as ever. As the foremost technical agriculture organization, it remains essential that FAO leverage its resources to maximize efficiency and impact of its work and continue to focus in particular on the areas of addressing food insecurity in which it has a comparative advantage over other organizations.

FAO cannot be all things to all people: as we know from Council's recommendation for zero nominal growth in the 2018-2019 Program of Work and Budget, FAO needs to make hard choices and prioritize where it has strengths like normative, technical, and programmatic work. We believe that this body can work within the fiscal realities we collectively face without negatively impacting FAO's core programs.

The United States recognizes the important role that international organizations play in addressing global food insecurity. The Rome-based agencies – FAO, WFP, and IFAD – are essential to this task. We strongly appreciate the work done by FAO and the other Rome-based agencies to eliminate duplication, increase transparency, and remain focused within their respective mandates and areas of comparative advantage. We are pleased by the improved cooperation we see among the agencies, and we encourage the agencies to continue to expand cooperation.

In closing, I'll note that food insecurity caused by conflict, weather, and other crises can be exacerbated by chronic under-investment in agriculture, inefficient inputs, underdeveloped markets, and poor governance. The U.S. approach to global food security is to get at the root causes of these issues through our food assistance, through our capacity building, research, innovation, and trade facilitation programs, and through our investments in value chains, resilience, and nutrition.

Why? Because achieving food security is important not only to hundreds of millions of hungry people, but also to the sustainable economic growth of developing nations and the long-term national security and economic prosperity of the United States and, indeed, all nations in this room.

We in this room have a shared purpose under the Sustainable Development Goals: to end global hunger and food insecurity. Together we can, in the words of Sonny Perdue, do right and feed everyone.

Thank you.