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**Michael Scuse
Under Secretary for
Farm and Foreign Agricultural Services
U.S. Department of Agriculture
Remarks at the International Food Aid and Development Conference
Tuesday, May 8, 2012
Westin Crown Center Hotel
Kansas City, Missouri
8:15 a.m.**

Thank you, Jim, and good morning everyone. I am honored to be here.

As Under Secretary for USDA's Farm and Foreign Agricultural Services, I oversee three agencies: one handles domestic farm programs, another administers international trade and capacity building programs, and the third helps producers manage risk through effective, market-based risk management solutions. These agencies are partnered within USDA because we seek to use and strengthen the mutually beneficial relationship between U.S. agricultural producers and people who are hungry worldwide.

This year's conference pays homage to your extraordinary efforts to move food from where it is harvested on American farms, to the baskets of poor, malnourished people around the world. Americans are historically generous in answering the call of those in need and sharing our bounty with those less fortunate. This tradition has set a high standard for the rest of the world to follow. So, I want to thank you for your high level of dedication to humanitarian efforts that are truly an American phenomenon.

As a global leader in agricultural trade and research and the world's largest provider of food aid, the United States demonstrates its commitment to eliminating hunger and malnutrition every day. In fiscal year 2011, the United States provided \$2.1 billion of food assistance to 82 countries. That's nearly 2 million tons of American-grown and American-processed food that helped feed more than 53 million people.

This humanitarian effort is, above all, a partnership. Using public tax dollars and implementing partner know-how, our Food for Progress and McGovern-Dole International Food for Education and Child Nutrition Programs move food along the value chain to its ultimate destination. Along the way we create jobs here in the United States and around the world in production, processing, transportation, and marketing. It's a huge endeavor we accomplish every single day, mostly without a hitch. And we do it by working together through a collaborative effort.

Over the next two days, we will discuss our joint efforts from an operational and implementation perspective. This back-to-basics focus addresses your needs and interests, including more opportunities for networking with universities and public and private sector partners. It also demonstrates how we are constantly seeking new and innovative approaches to deliver food assistance. From the moment USDA procures the commodities to the moment you, our partners, deliver them to recipients on the ground, we want to improve outcomes so they can be replicated and sustained.

Operational Changes

To accomplish this goal, both USDA and USAID continue to improve the management of our food assistance programs by focusing on results and looking for better ways to run the programs. Here are a few examples of the changes we have made.

- USDA now uses the Federal Business Opportunities website so all interested parties see requests for proposals and future procurement plans.
- For the first time, USDA is seeking Food for Progress and McGovern-Dole proposals for fiscal year 2013 via the main U.S. government site, www.grants.gov. We announced the solicitation on several other websites as well.
- Starting in fiscal 2012, we began negotiating agreements via USDA's Food Aid Information System, which USDA's Food Assistance staff briefed you about yesterday morning.
- Last year, USDA implemented Results Oriented Management for the Food for Progress and McGovern-Dole programs. Our food assistance partners must now regularly report on their progress in increasing agricultural productivity, expanding trade, improving literacy of school-aged children, and increasing the use of health and dietary practices.

- Starting on June 15, commodities purchased for food assistance programs will be stored or handled only by facilities licensed under the new Export Food Aid Commodity Warehouse Licensing Agreement. The agreement was developed in response to sanitation and security concerns of food assistance suppliers. A breakout session tomorrow afternoon will review specific details.
- Finally, by the end of June, USDA will submit an independent final report to Congress about the four-year Local and Regional Food Aid Procurement Pilot Project. We will use the findings to ensure that we are getting needed aid to the right places in the most efficient manner possible.

All of these changes will help our food assistance programs operate more effectively, and will help ensure that program dollars go straight to addressing the core objective of these programs: meeting the needs of hungry people, while showing them how to rejuvenate their agricultural sectors and increase their capacity to trade. With the world's population expected to top 9.3 billion by 2050, our efforts are all the more urgent.

Feed the Future

That's what the Administration's Feed the Future initiative is all about: bringing together resources from across the U.S. government to reduce global poverty and hunger by accelerating growth in the agriculture sector.

USDA's role in Feed the Future focuses on our core competencies: in-country capacity building; basic and applied research and extension; and market information, statistics, and economic analysis. USDA is focused on building capacity in Feed the Future-targeted countries and regions that have committed to leveraging our investment by increasing their own investment in agriculture as well.

Feed the Future seeks to marshal the incredible resources that exist across the U.S. government. Even though the challenges these countries face are enormous, we recognize that we need a long-term commitment on the part of all players involved—the governments themselves, academia, and the private sector.

Nutrition and Education

All of these parties know that nutrition is a critical driver for economic growth and poverty reduction. USDA is a proud partner in the whole-of-government effort to support country-owned processes that integrate agriculture and nutrition. As part of this effort, we are engaged in a pilot program to develop and test food aid products that are specifically targeted to the needs of populations at risk. For example:

- In Bangladesh, we are introducing specially formulated food supplements – including a wheat-soy blend and a chickpea spread – to address stunting and wasting in infants and young children.

- In Guinea-Bissau, we are testing the effectiveness of a ready-to-use, fortified dairy protein paste to boost the micronutrient intake of school-age children.
- Additional products in the pipeline include blends using sorghum, soybeans, cowpea, and corn to be made into porridge in Tanzania, as well as a soy protein-fortified custard in Mozambique, and a lipid-based nutrient supplement or “smart peanut butter” in Haiti.

After completion of the field trials, each project will be evaluated independently. Based on the findings, these products could be added to the U.S. government’s list of food products available for food aid programming.

Women and Girls

Also at the heart of USDA’s programs is an understanding that investments in women and girls reduce poverty and promote global stability.

Women and girls are a key focus of USDA’s McGovern-Dole program. Through school feeding programs and take-home rations, the program aims to increase school enrollment and attendance, especially among girls. It also provides maternal and child nutrition classes to improve the health of lactating women and their children. Studies have shown that providing children with a healthy meal improves their concentration and ability to learn.

Since 2001, the McGovern-Dole program has operated in 44 countries, providing more than 90,000 metric tons of donated U.S. commodities and feeding more

than 22 million children. The success of this program has also led to dramatically increased international support for expansion of school-feeding operations in developing countries around the world.

We are gratified by this impact, but recognize that only through country-led sustainable initiatives can we continue to witness the value of education and nutrition well into the future. Tomorrow morning the Republic of Congo's Minister of Education Rosalie Kama-Niamayoua [*Rose-a-lee Comma Knee-ah-may-you-ah*] and Angola's Ministry of Education National School Feeding Coordinator Domingos Torres [*Doe-ming-os Tour-ez*] will discuss how their countries are addressing this issue. And, later this afternoon, a breakout session will focus on the need to improve the quality of education and increase early childhood literacy.

To achieve these outcomes, USDA is tapping into its resources of companies, trade associations, academia, and private-voluntary and non-governmental organizations to build public-private partnerships.

Public-Private Partnerships

Partnerships, after all, are where the rubber meets the road. That's why USDA is focused on strengthening our partnerships with international relief and development groups, as well as local and international companies. Relying on the knowledge and expertise of private-sector stakeholders allows USDA to leverage limited funding to make a broad and enduring impact.

Our partners show individuals and their neighbors in rural villages how to sustainably develop their agricultural sector. They provide technical assistance and training. People become capable of feeding themselves and their communities, open village banks and obtain micro-credit loans, increase incomes, and eventually expand their own operations or, through farmer cooperatives, reach beyond their local communities to regional and international markets.

Speaking of cooperatives, the United Nations has declared this the International Year of Cooperatives, recognizing the invaluable contributions of cooperatives to furthering socioeconomic development. We use the cooperative model in our private sector partnerships. Private sector stakeholders and buyers link to one cooperative representing 500 to 5,000 farmers to purchase agricultural products, rather than linking to 50 individual farmers. The cooperative passes profits back to its farmers, resulting in higher incomes, increased capacity, and reduced food insecurity.

By linking farmers and their cooperatives to local and international companies, we facilitate technology transfer and sustainable economic development and trade, exponentially increasing the value of our international development efforts.

Examples of these types of partnerships under the Food for Progress program include:

- The East African Breweries, a subsidiary of the Diageo Corporation, will buy sorghum from Ugandan farmers for its in-country processing facility.

USDA's implementing partner, Mercy Corps, is working with the farmers to help them increase their yields and market and sell their crops.

- The U.S. government has joined with TechnoServe and Cargill to strengthen Mozambique's poultry and feed industries. This model is being replicated in Kenya.
- In Tanzania, USDA and Catholic Relief Services will work with maize farmers to introduce soybean intercropping and also connect the farmers with private buyers.
- In Cameroon, Imperial Foods Company is manufacturing affordable and nutritious noodles for the commercial market and for food aid, using imported U.S. commodities and other ingredients.

We are also using our Borlaug and Cochran fellowship programs to facilitate public-private partnerships in developing countries. Just last week, USDA and the World Cocoa Foundation announced we are joining forces to improve cocoa production and ensure quality along the entire value chain. We will provide fellowships to 32 scientists and public- and private-sector professionals from West Africa, Southeast Asia, and Latin America. These fellows will gain skills and knowledge that they can take back home to help their countries become more competitive in producing and exporting quality cocoa and cocoa products.

Closing

Let me wrap up by thanking you for the work you do to break the cycle of poverty and food insecurity around the world. That work has a human face. Oftentimes, it is the face of a woman or child that otherwise would not stand a chance of improving their lives without your help.

Working together, we can help developing countries become more food secure and resilient against adversity. As they unlock their economic potential and raise incomes, they become better trade partners with increasing demand for a wider variety of food and agricultural products. This creates new markets for U.S. agriculture, which ultimately creates jobs and benefits the U.S. economy as well.

USDA looks forward to working with each of you as we build upon our long food aid legacy, with an eye toward a future where all people have enough to eat and where farmers, where ever they are located, are profitable and sustainable.

Thank you.

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