

**DRAFT REMARKS – MARY CHAMBLISS  
BEFORE THE EXPORT FOOD AID CONFERENCE  
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**Food Aid: From the 1940s to Now**

This is my third time at this excellent conference and each year more and more of us in the food aid community come to Kansas City – it’s becoming a spring tradition. It is wonderful that all of us who share a common commitment to a healthy world – one free of want for food – come to Kansas City to work together to make a good food aid system even better.

In thinking about today=s luncheon, and what I could present that might complement rather than compete with your meal, I decided I=d try to take your mind, ever so briefly, off the many challenging technical issues we are discussing ... and focus, instead, on the food aid legacy that has been built over the last 50 years since President Eisenhower signed The Trade Development and Assistance Act – PL480. This legacy is something we don=t think about in our daily work, but having passed my own 50<sup>th</sup> sometime ago, I know it is a milestone that encourages at least some reflection on where one has been.

And the food aid community has been in very difficult and dangerous places over these fifty years.

But working together, we have done important things for people in desperate need around the world -- things which, given the obstacles that had to be overcome, are remarkable. We are tackling a major global challenge. As Secretary Veneman noted recently, “The global ramifications of hunger are hard to overstate. Persistent hunger causes human suffering and death. It leads to political instability, economic stagnation, civil unrest, and war. It is at the core of so many of the world’s most intractable problems.”

### **Lessons from Berlin and the Marshall Plan**

Today’s food aid programs had their origins a half-century ago in the aftermath of World War II. Certainly, the Marshall Plan for the reconstruction of Europe laid much of the groundwork, showing policymakers that such a program could succeed and how it could benefit U.S. economic and strategic interests, while also providing support for U.S. agriculture.

The United States launched the Marshall Plan’s European Recovery Program in 1948. That same year, in June, the Soviets imposed a complete blockade on the Allied-controlled sectors of Berlin. During that almost year-long blockade and in its immediate aftermath more than 2 million tons of food, coal, and other essentials were airlifted into West Berlin. This was the first, but certainly not the last time, that airlifting was necessary to save lives.

In addition to the food provided under the Marshall Plan, under the 1949 Agricultural Act, the Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC) was providing its surplus commodities directly to our partners in the private voluntary organization (PVOs) community to help needy people overseas.

## **Food Aid's Early Years**

The legislation authorizing P.L. 480 envisioned a program to help meet humanitarian food needs around the world, while also supporting U.S. market goals and providing outlets for grain surpluses then held as CCC stocks and promote economic growth.

In P.L. 480's first decade, food aid accounted for more than half of total U.S. grain export volume and an even larger share of our wheat exports. Volume climbed rapidly, rising from 1.2 million tons in the first year (1955) to 11.5 million by 1960 and more than 17 million by the mid 1960s – when almost daily food aid shipments from the United States prevented massive famine in India.

During the 1950's and early 1960's, the United States and Canada were the only countries with established, ongoing international food aid programs. In 1962, primarily at the recommendation of the United States, the World Food Program was launched. In 1967, a U.S. initiative led to the creation of the Food Aid Convention, under which the United States and now 11 other developed countries formally agreed to contribute a set amount of food aid to needy countries each year.

## **Food Aid in the 70s and 80s**

With large grain purchases by the Soviet Union in the early 1970's and a dramatic shift from the comfort of surpluses to tight stocks, sharply rising prices, and the fear of shortages, American food aid retrenched. Amendments to P.L. 480 in 1973 and 1974 required more emphasis on helping the most needy countries, while also requiring that food aid not be concentrated in one or two countries. U.S. aid volume dropped from around 10 million tons in 1970 to only a little

over 4 million tons by 1975, with Bangladesh and India the two major recipients.

At the 1974 World Food Conference, Secretary of State Henry Kissinger presented new U.S. proposals in a strong and memorable message further codifying America=s food aid vision. Kissinger=s influential speech began simply: AWe meet to address man=s most fundamental need. The threat of famine, the fact of hunger, has haunted men and nations throughout history.”

These proposals led to the expansion of the World Food Program and, in 1979, the establishment of IFAD, the UN International Fund for Agricultural Development, to mobilize resources to combat rural hunger and poverty in developing countries.

The global community felt it had a better understanding of the root causes of hunger, and there was a lot of optimism. Amendments to P.L. 480 during this period focused on expanding the development impact of food aid. Delegates to that 1974 World Food Conference resolved that within 10 years, no child should go hungry and no person fear for his or her daily bread. But the optimism did not achieve the goal. Ten years later, in 1984 and 1985, famine claimed tens of thousands of lives in Ethiopia, Mozambique, Chad, and Sudan, despite record food aid shipments to Africa.

### **Current Food Aid Programs**

During the 1980s, Congress created additional food aid authorities. In the early 1980s Congress reinstated the authority under Section 416(b) of the 1949 Agriculture Act for CCC to donate commodities from its stocks to help people overseas. This authority had been deleted during the late 1960s. In the 1985 farm bill, Congress authorized Food for Progress, a food aid

program to support development by promoting free enterprise activity in the rural/agricultural sector of developing countries. And most recently in the 2002 farm bill, the McGovern/Dole International Food for Education and Child Nutrition Program was authorized.

Food aid in the 1990s moved to parts of the world many never expected – the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. In the early years of the decade, food aid provided a transitional buffer for Poland as the Polish government turned away from the old-style central planning and embarked on a dramatic shift to a market-oriented economy. Food aid programs were among the first to generate any economic activity in Bosnia after the war there; food aid has created a viable agricultural commercial entity in Russia that now supplies substantial food to Moscow's supermarkets. These are just a few of the innovative food aid programs that have helped many make an adjustment to a new world.

And in 1996 a second World Food Summit was held to refocus international attention and effort on defeating hunger and food insecurity. In June 2002 when Secretary Veneman represented President Bush at the World Food Summit: *Five Years Later*, she outlined three U.S. priorities in working toward the international goal for reducing global hunger: increasing agricultural productivity, ending famine, and improving nutrition.

At the 1996 Summit the world again committed to a goal: cutting in half the number of hungry, needy people by 2015. Achieving this goal means lifting at least 400 million people out of poverty. It is a goal all of us here today work to achieve.

But unfortunately, the emergencies – most often man-made – are continuing and we in this

room continue to respond. While many countries in Asia have made great progress and we don't hear the word famine in the same sentence with India or Bangladesh, we now hear it in the context of North Korea. And the needs in sub-Saharan Africa seem to almost grow worse as the consequences of HIV/AIDS become more and more clear, and conflicts continue in too many countries causing death and destruction.

### **Conclusion - Food Aid in the Future**

As we look ahead, we can see that food aid programs will be needed for some time. Emergencies don't go away; in fact, they seem to grow more complex and intractable. How will "failed states" be re-created? How will the world address the HIV/AIDS pandemic?

How will the divide between the rich and poor be overcome? How will food aid programs be affected by the on-going international trade negotiations? How will increasing security concerns affect our ability to respond to the needy in insecure and dangerous places?

These are among the questions/challenges that we collectively face in the future. But we should not forget that in the struggle against hunger and malnutrition, many battles have been won. We have learned a lot about long-term development and how to help people overcome poverty. As Secretary Veneman said, we have saved many millions of lives and helped countries lift themselves out of poverty and dependence. Of course, there is still a very long way to go with more than 800 million people still today suffering from hunger or malnutrition; many of these people in the most difficult places to reach. So the battle will go on. And we in this room will continue our commitment to a healthy world for all.