

Testimony submitted by Sean Callahan, President and CEO of Catholic Relief Services
to the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug
Administration, and Related Agencies
regarding Fiscal Year 2018 Appropriations

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Chairman Aderholt and Ranking Member Bishop, thank you for this opportunity to provide you written testimony on the international food assistance accounts funded through this Subcommittee, and for your steadfast support for these accounts over the years. Catholic Relief Services (CRS) is a wholly owned subsidiary of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, and we reach millions of poor and vulnerable people in over 100 countries in humanitarian and development programs. We are guided by Church teaching, including a preferential option for the poor, subsidiarity, integral human development, and good stewardship. CRS respectfully requests that the Subcommittee provide in FY2018 a minimum of \$1.716 billion for the Food for Peace (FFP) program, \$201 million for the McGovern-Dole Food for Education and Child Nutrition program (“McGovern-Dole”), and \$80 million for the U.S. Department of Agriculture Local and Regional Procurement program (“USDA LRP”).

Famine Supplemental

Before discussing programs in depth, I wanted to call your attention to the famine that has been declared in parts of South Sudan, as well as famine-like conditions in Somalia, Nigeria, and Yemen. CRS calls on Congress to fund a \$1 billion emergency supplemental in FY17 to respond to this crisis. I also note that CRS currently implements a FFP program that delivers

U.S. commodities to 800,000 South Sudanese. Rescissions in FY17, or funding levels below our FY18 request, could severely impact this ongoing humanitarian action.

Food for Peace

FFP is the flagship international food aid program of the U.S. government, and provides funding for emergency and development food aid programs, both of which CRS currently implements. CRS is a strong advocate for FFP because program resources are directed to the most vulnerable. In emergency programs, humanitarian assistance is provided to families who have lost much, sometimes all, due to drought or conflict. In development programs, assistance is targeted to communities that rank at the bottom of key world indicators, such as the incidence of stunting. CRS also strongly supports FFP because its development programs use a multi-sectoral approach to address root causes of hunger. FFP programming includes efforts around agricultural development, nutrition, emergency preparedness, and other areas, that tackle community challenges that impact food security. It is our experience that this kind of approach gives aid implementers the best chance of making real progress in addressing food insecurity and poverty. I would like to highlight how CRS is using FFP resources in some key areas.

Emergency Response Scale-Up: CRS manages the Joint Emergency Operations Program (JEOP), the primary FFP emergency program for Ethiopia. JEOP is an atypical multi-year FFP emergency program designed to establish and maintain capacity to scale up response. Over the course of 2015-2016 growing season, the program was tested as Eastern and Southern Africa, including Ethiopia, were hit by severe drought caused by El Niño. Prior to the drought, JEOP served 700,000 people, but in just a few months that number rose to over 2.9 million people. Ultimately, JEOP played a pivotal role in supporting the Government of Ethiopia's food security efforts, which successfully prevented famine during this crisis. JEOP beneficiary numbers have

since come down. That said, recurring drought in East Africa, and an increasing likelihood of another El Niño in the 2017-18 growing season means that JEOP will be called upon again. We implore the Subcommittee to fully resource FFP to ensure that JEOP response is adequate.

Soil and Water Management: CRS has integrated important soil and water management practices in many of our FFP development programs to help vulnerable farm families whose farm land is depleted of essential nutrients and have little water available to them. Our work focuses on 1) recharging aquifers with better rain water capture, 2) restoring land impacted by run-off using check dams and vegetative cover, and 3) employing cover crops that replenish soil nutrients while providing additional sources of nutrition. This work makes land more productive and insulates farmers from drought. For example, in Malawi during the El Niño drought last summer USAID produced the video “Wilfred’s Leap of Faith,” documenting irrigation farming, available at https://stories.usaid.gov/video/?video_id=4492. The program work behind this story included soil and water interventions as discussed above, under a FFP development program that CRS implemented from 2009-2014. As the video demonstrates, two years after project completion and in the middle of a historic drought, these farmers were still thriving.

Impact Investing: CRS incorporates the new paradigm of impact investing within some of our FFP development programs. For example, working with USAID’s Development Credit Authority (DCA), CRS uses our cost-share in Madagascar to support a private-sector partner’s purchase of certified organic vanilla. The vanilla is sourced from up to 9,000 small farmers who participate in the FFP program, and with whom we are working to improve farming practices so they can meet quantity and quality requirements. CRS has also undertaken a similar effort in Malawi working with the private sector and up to 3,400 small farmers in producing the moringa plant, whose protein- and nutrient-rich leaves are harvested for dietary supplements.

McGovern-Dole

McGovern-Dole provides U.S. sourced school lunches to primary school children whose communities suffer from food insecurity. Across the seven countries in which CRS currently implements McGovern-Dole, 78,000 metric tons of food are being used to feed 390,000 students, improving food security, learning environments, and school systems for these children.

Food Security: McGovern-Dole school lunches are provided during the ‘lean season’ (period between harvests), when household food availability is low. The countries targeted are also prone to shocks that disrupt normal food availability, like drought, thus serving as another source of food for needy children when food is scarce. In many cases, the lunch provided through McGovern-Dole is the only meal these children receive all day. Further, the food provided is fortified with much needed micronutrients.

Environment for Health and Learning: The provision of school lunches is a key incentive for parents to send their children to school. As documented by external evaluators such as Boston College and the University of Notre Dame, our programs positively impact enrollment and attendance. In Laos, for example, evaluators saw a 12% increase in girls’ regular attendance. In Mali, girls’ school enrollment increased by 41%, and regular attendance by all students increased from 57% to 95%. In addition to school lunches, CRS’ McGovern-Dole programs provide a variety of critical interventions designed to help improve the learning environment, which include teacher training, the development of teaching and learning materials, building water access points, promoting good hygiene practices, deworming and micronutrient supplementation, and the provision of school supplies. By providing schools in Laos this full package of health and education support activities, as well as school meals, we saw reading fluency more than double compared to programs with just school feeding.

School Systems: Through McGovern-Dole, CRS works with Departments of Education to develop plans for national school feeding programs, and collaborates on creating education policies, such as “Inclusive Education” which ensures the needs of children with disabilities or who are traditionally excluded, are addressed. CRS works with district-level structures responsible for oversight and management of education, to ensure they can support national plans and policies. Finally, CRS strengthens the capacity of parent and teacher associations and other school-level structures to manage daily school feeding activities, and to mobilize resources for other initiatives, such as infrastructure improvements and enrollment campaigns.

USDA LRP

The USDA LRP program is intended to purchase locally sourced food for McGovern-Dole programs that will help transition management of school feeding to local governments. Indeed, the success of CRS managed McGovern-Dole programs inspires governments to act in this area. For example, the government of Burkina Faso has invested \$30 million in a national school feeding program, and has contributed \$100K to transport McGovern-Dole commodities, and another \$138K to purchase extra reading books for McGovern-Dole supported schools. In Honduras, the government provided CRS \$2M to diversify the school lunch menu with local procurement of eggs, vegetables, and fruit, and to support the government’s efforts in developing a multi-year “Sustainable School Feeding Model.” Ultimately, we believe the USDA LRP program could be used to support these kinds of efforts, and hasten transition to local ownership in many countries.

It is through these types of humanitarian and development programs that other countries view Americans. They highlight our values and leave lasting impressions on those we reach, building a partnership of trust in many fragile countries around the world.