



We ask Congress to support policies that improve the way our government administers international food aid. We can make the system more efficient and effective by:

- ◆ Authorizing USAID to send food aid overseas using the most competitively priced freight, which will in turn reduce shipping costs;
- ◆ Sending food directly to beneficiaries, phasing out inefficient third party distribution practices;
- ◆ Allowing regionally grown food to be included in aid, supporting local agricultural markets and reducing spoiled food.

Why should we reform our food-aid?

As the world's largest food donor, the United States helps millions of people around the globe stave off hunger and malnutrition through its international food programs. As a faith community, we should be proud of our civil dedication to these programs. However, millions more people remain hungry and malnourished, in part because the American food-aid system is fraught with inefficiencies – and has been for decades.

For every U.S. tax dollar spent to feed hungry people in emergency situations, only an average of 40 cents goes toward actual food; the other 60 cents goes to pay [administrative costs](#). The current food-aid system has led to spoiled food and has harmed agricultural producers in local communities.

The current food-aid system also maintains an over-reliance on food procurement from the United States, rather than using food grown regionally and locally. Enabling more locally sourced food would not only significantly reduce administrative costs, it would help local farmers in poor countries. Locally sourced food would also help to develop local markets, thereby, helping to lift people out of poverty and reducing their need for food aid. Furthermore, shipping all food from the United States can take several weeks and costs millions of more dollars in transportation expenses. By reducing transportation costs, more money will be available to purchase additional food.

Approximately [15 percent of U.S. food aid](#) is donated to development organizations that sell the food in the area to support their own programs. This practice can actually harm regional agricultural markets, creating an imbalance in commodities prices and access to local markets. Farmers and local growers are often some of the poorest people in affected regions and need assistance the most during emergencies.

By phasing out this dated practice, U.S. food assistance could reach an estimated [800,000 more malnourished people](#).

Our faith response

In the Bible, God is described as one who “executes justice for the oppressed; who gives food to the hungry” ([Psalm 146:7](#)). In turn, the ELCA has made the end of world hunger an imperative. Jesus' disciples were praised for feeding those who were hungry, even if they were strangers. Today in our church, [ELCA World Hunger](#) works in more than 50 countries with local churches and organizations to meet the needs that they have found in their particular contexts.

We believe in robustly funding efforts to support our most marginalized neighbors. However, government regulations must not be so burdensome that they stifle the production of the very goods and services people need to live. To make a transforming difference and end deep hunger in our world, we must encourage policies that enact the most profound and efficient effects in affected communities. Only then will more of God's people will be fed and be able given a real opportunity to flourish in our world.

Learn more: [Senate Foreign Relations hearing; Food for Peace by the Numbers; U.S. Government Accounta-](#)

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