

# REFORMING U.S. FOOD ASSISTANCE POLICIES



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America  
God's work. Our hands.

*“We of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America share with the Church of Jesus Christ in all times and places the calling to be peacemakers. ... Massive hunger and poverty, alongside abundance and wealth, violate the bonds of our common humanity. Such economic disparities are a cause of conflict and war and spur our efforts to build just economic relationships necessary for peace.” (ELCA, “For Peace in God’s World,” 1995)*

## Global Need

An estimated [870 million people](#) currently suffer from malnutrition and hunger. Rising global temperatures and intensified droughts, floods, and other extreme weather patterns can reduce crop yields and exacerbate the food insecurity of impoverished and vulnerable populations around the world. Furthermore, the United Nations estimates that global food production will have to increase by [60 percent by 2050](#) in order to meet rising human needs.

## U.S. Food Assistance Programs

Food for Peace is the United States’ largest international food assistance program. Part of U.S. farm and food legislation and based on the understanding that “[Food is strength, and food is peace, and food is freedom](#),” Food for Peace combats global hunger and promotes food security by providing food assistance that saves lives, helps people recover from crises, and supports nutrition and development. Since its inception in 1954, more than three billion people in 150 countries have benefited directly from U.S. food aid. Today, Food for Peace provides food and support annually to millions suffering from hunger and malnutrition in 44 countries.

## Proposed Reforms

Following leadership from Presidents Bush and [Obama](#), bipartisan Members of Congress, policy analysts, advocates, humanitarian service providers, and [agri-business and farming interest](#) groups have supported proposed reforms to Food for Peace that would modernize our government’s approach to food assistance and allow Food for Peace to feed more people in need and reduce average cost per beneficiary.

[Recently proposed reforms](#) would reach a minimum of two to four million more people each year by reducing inefficiencies and increasing food aid interventions that support and buttress local agriculture production. They would enable greater flexibility within the program, allowing food assistance (in the form of crop commodities or cash vouchers) to be distributed according to the unique needs of each recipient community or emergency situation.

The reforms would also allow up to 45 percent of Food for Peace commodities to be purchased within the region in which it would be distributed. Implemented when and where appropriate, this “local and regional procurement” would drastically reduce the cost of food delivery, support local markets and local farmers, and increase agricultural development around the world. These reforms would have minimal impact on American farmers (U.S. food assistance currently accounts for [less than one percent of all U.S. agricultural exports](#)), who would continue to make critical contributions to Food for Peace’s effort to end hunger and extreme poverty.

### **ELCA Commitment and Action**

The ELCA Washington Office, in partnership with ELCA World Hunger, brings decades of implementing experience, relationships with global church partners and Lutheran teachings to the debate about food aid reform. As we accompany those who are underfed and malnourished, we also contribute through our advocacy a unique vision for Food for Peace that most effectively feeds and empowers the world’s hungry and vulnerable.

**Learn More** about how our faith and our global Lutheran partnerships inspire us—through [ELCA World Hunger](#)—to serve those in need by addressing the root causes of hunger and poverty and embolden us to advocate for [U.S. policy reform](#) that will empower our brothers and sisters in Christ who currently face food scarcity and malnutrition.