



Renewing American Leadership in the Fight Against Global Hunger and Poverty

The Chicago Initiative on Global Agricultural Development



Report Issued by an Independent Leaders Group
on Global Agricultural Development

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Catherine Bertini and Dan Glickman, cochairs

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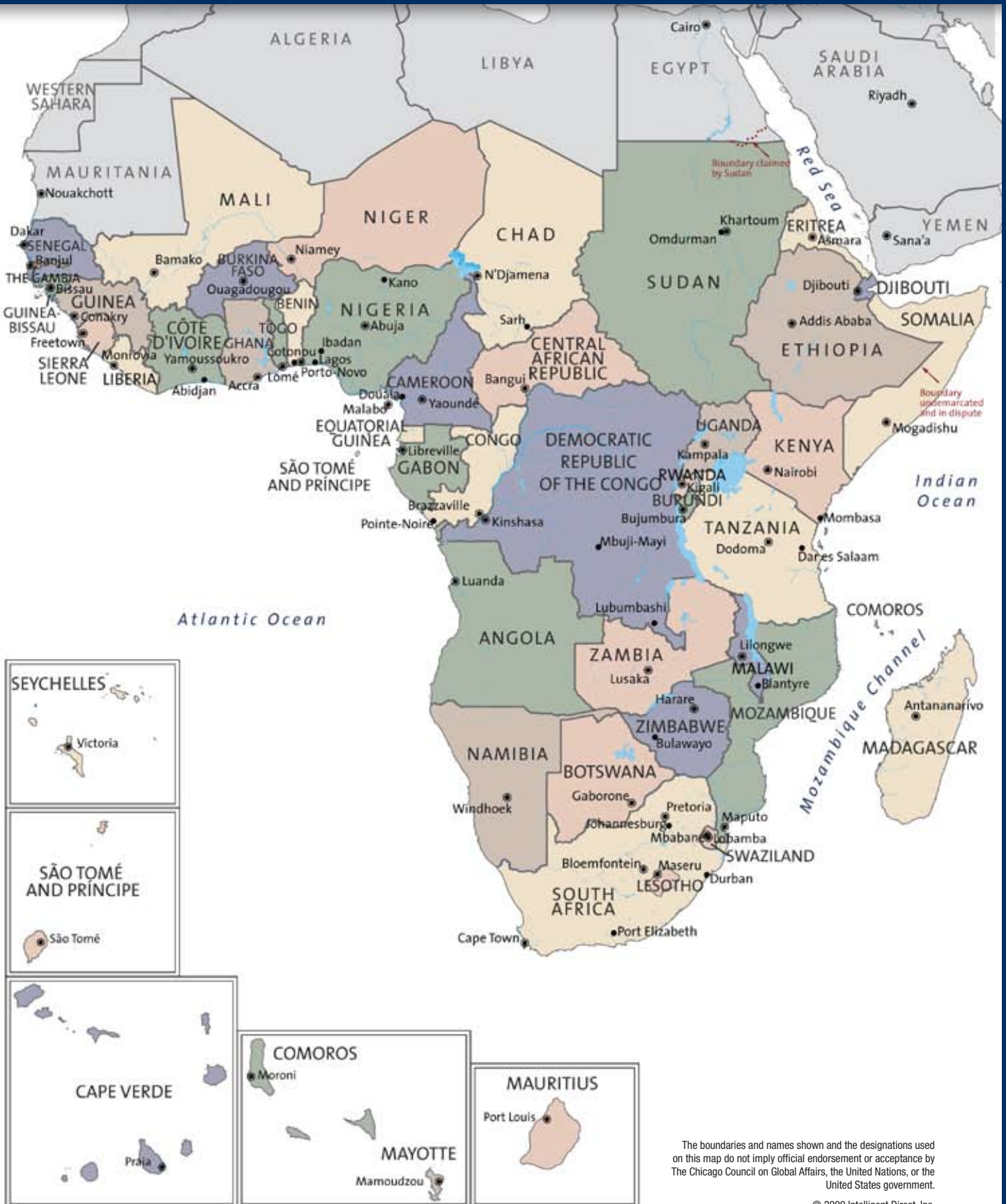
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SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA



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SOUTH ASIA



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FOREWORD

The 2008 global food crisis renewed global attention on the persistent problems of hunger and poverty in the developing world and aroused concern about global food security over the long term. Of greatest concern is the extreme plight of the approximately 600 million people who live on less than \$1 per day in rural areas of Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia and depend on agriculture for their livelihoods.

The solution to their plight lies in a sustained, long-term effort to increase agricultural productivity on smallholder farms. Yet over the past two decades there has been a steady decline in the world's support for the research, education and extension, and rural infrastructure improvements that are needed to help smallholder farmers improve their crop yields and gain access to agricultural markets. Now is the time for the United States to provide the leadership so sorely needed to support a second Green Revolution benefiting smallholder farmers in Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia. We have compelling moral, economic, diplomatic, and security reasons to do so. Lacking for too long has been firm and sustained leadership from the U.S. president and Congress that commits America to strong partnerships with African and Asian institutions in a frontal attack on this critical cause of global poverty.

The Chicago Council on Global Affairs launched the Global Agricultural Development Project in mid-2008 to generate political, media, and public discussion of the need for U.S. international leadership in a long-term agricultural development initiative in Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia. The Chicago Council's effort is aimed at building awareness of how the new U.S. administration and Congress can contribute to alleviating poverty and food insecurity through improved agricultural productivity and market access for smallholder farmers, with a special focus on the critical role of women in farm-level decisions. The Global Agricultural Development Project focuses on engaging U.S. decision makers and opinion makers such as prospective senior officials and advisors to the incoming Obama administration, key leaders in the 111th Congress, and nongovernmental organizations and interest groups in an effort to significantly expand U.S. development assistance programs for agriculture.

THE CHICAGO INITIATIVE

The Global Agricultural Development Leaders Group was convened in October 2008 to examine the risks posed by rural poverty and food insecurity in Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia, the role of women in farm families in bringing about change, and the opportunities for the United States to better address the challenge of global poverty through agricultural development. Cochaired by Catherine Bertini, former executive director of the UN World Food Program, and Dan Glickman, former U.S. secretary of agriculture, the bipartisan Leaders Group brought together eleven distinguished individuals with expertise in food and agriculture, foreign policy, development, U.S. public policy, and international organizations.

A committee of experts was assembled to support the work of the Leaders Group by providing a summary of critical issues and policy options. Chaired by Robert Thompson, Gardner Endowed Chair in Agriculture Policy at the University of Illinois Champaign-Urbana, this committee consisted of twelve individuals with expertise

in agricultural research, infrastructure and agricultural development, trade, regional affairs in Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia, and international economics.

The central outcome of the Global Agricultural Development Project is The Chicago Initiative on Global Agricultural Development, a package of specific policy recommendations for the new U.S. administration and Congress, unanimously endorsed by the Global Agricultural Development Leaders Group. This report lays out these recommendations and provides the background and the arguments for taking immediate action to implement them. The Global Agricultural Development Project also includes a major outreach effort to increase awareness and support for The Chicago Initiative.

THE CHICAGO COUNCIL ON GLOBAL AFFAIRS

The Chicago Council is well positioned to facilitate dialogue on agriculture and foreign assistance issues. This effort builds upon the work of the Council's 2006 Task Force on Agriculture Policy, "Modernizing America's Farm and Food Policy: A Vision for a New Direction," which examined how to achieve meaningful sectorwide reform focused on ensuring the long-term competitiveness and sustainability of the U.S. agriculture and food systems. Moreover, many of the members of Congress active on issues of global agricultural development are drawn from the midwestern region, the agricultural center of America. The Council believes that its midwestern base and knowledge of U.S. agricultural issues contribute to the value of this report in the national discourse on development and foreign policy issues.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Chicago Council would first like to thank the Leaders Group cochairs, Catherine Bertini and Dan Glickman, for their skillful and dedicated leadership throughout the project's very demanding eight-month process. The issues surrounding the topic of agricultural development and how to advance it are complex and require expertise from individuals from disparate disciplines and backgrounds. It speaks to the stature, insight, and energy of Ms. Bertini and Mr. Glickman that the project was able to assemble a diverse group with wide-ranging expertise on the topic; seek the views of key players from the executive branch, Congress, international organizations, advocacy groups, and research communities; and incorporate these perspectives into a thorough, well-founded report.

The Council extends its deepest appreciation to the members of the Leaders Group. Each had distinct experiences and views on the issues considered, yet worked together effectively to achieve consensus on the report's recommendations. I would like to especially thank them for their time and willingness to exchange views candidly during and following the group's deliberations.

The Council is deeply grateful to the Experts Committee chair, Robert Thompson, who adroitly assembled a committee reflecting a variety of disciplines to provide critical thinking and guidance on the full spectrum of issues under examination by the Leaders Group. Dr. Thompson offered invaluable guidance throughout the project, including the development of the final report.

The Council also thanks the members of the Experts Committee, who provided valuable knowledge and guidance to the Leaders Group, first through identifying

key issues and options for the Leaders Group to consider, and then serving as a resource throughout the report development process.

The Council extends its deep appreciation to Robert Paarlberg, who served as senior consultant and principal writer of this report. Dr. Paarlberg, one of the United States' leading scholars in the field, brought his great wealth of knowledge and insight to the framing of the project agenda and the development of this report.

The Leaders Group cochairs and the Council also acknowledge and thank the numerous senior leaders; members of Congress; congressional staff; government officials; leaders in the NGO, advocacy, and think-tank communities; African and South Asian leaders; and experts on these issues who met with the Leaders Group cochairs and The Chicago Council delegation during visits to Washington, D.C., and Des Moines, Iowa. These many individuals provided valuable information on current U.S. policy and guidance on the report.

The Council extends a special thanks to C. Fred Bergsten and the Peterson Institute for International Economics for hosting the report's release.

Much credit is due in particular to David Joslyn, who served as the project's director and led the entire effort with great insight, skill, and dedication. Drawing on his own training and a career working in development assistance and international organizations, David brought the talents of expert, policy specialist, diplomat, and consultant to every aspect of the project. More than any other person, he brought all the moving parts together and made the project work.

Several members of The Chicago Council staff played key parts in planning and implementing the project and creating the final report. Lisa Eakman served brilliantly as the project manager, providing key input on the project's materials and final report and managing the day-to-day operational support for all aspects and participants in the project. She brought unmatched efficiency and a level of cheerfulness that brightened the entire enterprise for the many months we have been working together. Hal Woods provided invaluable support to all portions of the project process with enormous dedication and accuracy, and played a key role providing background research and materials to the project team. Editor Catherine Hug expertly managed the editing and design of the final report. Consultant Greg Holyk oversaw the creation and execution of the public and leader opinion studies and the writing of the summary of results. Consultant Steven Kull provided valuable insight during the survey design process. Silvia Veltcheva assisted in the design of the surveys, managed the day-to-day operations throughout its execution, and contributed to the writing of the summary of results. Consultant Michele Learner fact-checked the report. Interns Zachery Gebhardt and Matthew Powers and research assistant Amber Rankin assisted with the development of final report's figures, charts, and appendices. Chicago Council staff, including Jo Heindel, Sam Skinner, and Elisa Miller, also made valuable contributions to the effort.

Finally, The Chicago Council would like to express its deep appreciation and thanks to the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation for the generous support that made this project and report possible.

Marshall M. Bouton

President

The Chicago Council on Global Affairs

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



“To the people of poor nations, we pledge to work alongside you to make your farms flourish...”

—President Barack Obama, Inaugural Address, January 20, 2009

The Obama administration and the new Congress have before them an historic opportunity in 2009 to restore America’s global leadership in the fight against hunger and poverty. Today, hundreds of millions of people living in rural areas of South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa are struggling without success to provide food and income for their families from farming. This report describes the magnitude of this challenge, the reasons it must be addressed now, and an effective and affordable strategy to renew American leadership in the effort.

The Chicago Initiative on Global Agricultural Development will mobilize knowledge, training, assistance, and investment to increase the productivity and income of these farmers and their families. The United States has the expertise, institutions, and experience to provide critically needed support to the nations of Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia for a second Green Revolution. What is required is the vision and commitment of American governmental and private sector leaders, working alongside their African and South Asian counterparts in the years to come. If sustained, this Initiative will begin the process of lifting hundreds of millions of people out of poverty over the next two decades or less.

This report puts forward a set of five broad policy recommendations composed of twenty-one specific actions to refocus U.S. development policy on agriculture. If carried out, these actions would be the catalyst for significant additional support for

agricultural development. The early and strong commitment of the president of the United States and his key cabinet officers will be critical to the success of this effort.

PART I—CHALLENGE AND OPPORTUNITY: REDUCING HUNGER AND POVERTY IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA AND SOUTH ASIA

Why Is This Necessary?

Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia are home to the largest numbers of poor, hungry people in the world. In Sub-Saharan Africa today, one out of every three people is malnourished. Most of these more than 200 million hungry people live in rural areas where they struggle without success to secure adequate income and nutrition from their work as small-scale farmers. In South Asia roughly 400 million rural dwellers live in extreme poverty, earning less than \$1 per day from their work either on their own farms or as hired farm laborers. Most of these farmers are women.

Rural poverty in these two regions is projected to worsen in the years ahead due to continued rural population growth, growing pressures on limited land and water supplies, and climate change. In Africa food production has fallen behind population growth for most of the past two decades, and the number of undernourished people is expected to increase another 30 percent over the next ten years to reach 645 million. Under a “business-as-usual” scenario, with climate change taken into account, the number of undernourished people in Sub-Saharan Africa could triple between 1990 and 2080.

The source of these problems is not fluctuating food prices on the world market, but low productivity on the farm. The production growth needed will have to come from improved farm policies, technologies, and techniques, including those that address the effects of climate change.

How Did We Get Here?

Rural hunger and poverty decline dramatically when education, investment, and new technologies give farmers better ways to be productive. This happened in Europe and North America in the middle decades of the twentieth century, then in Japan, and then on the irrigated lands of East Asia and South Asia during the Green Revolution in the final decades of the twentieth century. The problem for Sub-Saharan Africa and the poorest areas of South Asia is that these original Green Revolution improvements had only limited reach.

The early achievements of the Green Revolution were nonetheless dramatic enough to create a false impression that the world’s food and farming problems had mostly been solved. As a consequence, international donors who had provided strong support for agricultural innovation and investment in the 1960s and 1970s began pulling money and support away. America’s official development assistance to agriculture in Africa declined approximately 85 percent from the mid-1980s to 2006. The United States is now spending twenty times as much on food aid in Africa as it is spending to help African farmers grow more of their own food.

What Should Be Done Now?

America must reassert its leadership in helping stimulate higher agricultural productivity in Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia—through agricultural education and extension, local agricultural research, and rural infrastructure—so the rural poor and hungry can feed themselves and help support growing populations under increasingly challenging climate conditions. Without American leadership, little will happen.

While the United States can and must take the lead, it must base its actions on new approaches suited to new realities and on engaging partners across the spectrum of governments and institutions that can and should be playing a much stronger role. A strong American initiative will encourage America's partners to bring their own resources to the table. Governments in Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia will also be asked to fulfill their pledges to restore the priority of rural poverty reduction. Finally, the United States must listen and respond to needs of women in these poor areas, who make up the vast majority of farmers in Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia.

What Difference Will It Make?

A number of statistics demonstrate what the result of investments in agricultural development can be. Economists project with some confidence that every 1 percent increase in per capita agricultural output tends to lead to a 1.6 percent increase in the incomes of the poorest 20 percent of the population. According to a recent study by the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) in Washington, D.C., if total investments in agricultural research and development in Sub-Saharan Africa were increased to \$2.9 billion annually by the year 2013, the number of poor people living on less than \$1 per day in the region would decline by an additional 144 million by 2020. If annual agricultural research and development investments in South Asia were increased to \$3.1 billion by 2013, a total of 125 million more citizens in this region would escape poverty by 2020, and the poverty ratio in the region would decrease from 35 percent to 26 percent.

Why Is It in America's Interest?

Much more than empathy or compassion is at issue here. America's diplomatic, economic, cultural, and security interests will increasingly be compromised if our government does not begin immediately to change its policy posture toward the rural agricultural crisis currently building in Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia. Through The Chicago Initiative, America can strengthen its moral standing, renew ties and relationships in regions of heightened strategic concern, increase its political influence and improve its competitive position, hedge against the serious future danger of failed states, open the door to increased trade and cultural exchange, and strengthen American institutions.

Why Act Now?

With so many other urgent priorities confronting the new U.S. administration and Congress, why should any scarce governmental attention or resources go in 2009 to international agricultural development?

- Renewed American engagement would signal a dramatic shift in America’s relations with the developing world. It would be a first but transformative step with the promise of lasting impact.
- Global food shortages triggered by much higher prices have focused greater political attention on food and hunger issues. This creates a unique opportunity for action.
- The rural poverty and hunger crisis will only grow larger with every year of inaction. Postponing action on this Initiative beyond 2009 could mean, in the reality of American politics, a delay until 2013 or even 2017, allowing an already desperate situation to deteriorate even more.

PART II—RECOMMENDATIONS: RENEWING ATTENTION TO AGRICULTURE IN U.S. DEVELOPMENT POLICY

The recommendations of The Chicago Initiative on Global Agricultural Development are based on several principles and priorities:

- Reducing large-scale hunger and poverty abroad as well as at home is consistent with America’s interests and values.
- Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia are the two regions where hunger and poverty problems are furthest from being solved.
- Women play a particularly central role in the agricultural sector in both Africa and South Asia and must be central to any new U.S. approach.
- Priority should be given to restoring U.S. leadership in agricultural development based on reciprocal partnerships. This will require the early and sustained leadership of the president of the United States, his key aides, and senior members of Congress.
- The problems of rural hunger and poverty in the developing world cannot be solved from the outside. America should always respect, nurture, and never stifle local initiatives and local leadership.
- The Chicago Initiative represents an initial and small step, but potentially a transformative one toward reducing hunger and poverty in Africa and South Asia.

RECOMMENDATION 1: Increase support for agricultural education and extension at all levels in Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia.

- ACTION 1a. Increase USAID support for Sub-Saharan African and South Asian students—as well as younger teachers and researchers and policymakers—seeking to study agriculture at American universities.

- ACTION 1b. Increase the number and extent of American agricultural university partnerships with universities in Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia.
- ACTION 1c. Provide direct support for agricultural education, research, and extension for young women and men through rural organizations, universities, and training facilities.
- ACTION 1d. Build a special Peace Corps cadre of agriculture training and extension volunteers who work within Sub-Saharan African and South Asian institutions to provide on-the-ground, practical training, especially with and for women farmers.
- ACTION 1e. Support primary education for rural girls and boys through school feeding programs based on local or regional food purchase.

RECOMMENDATION 2: Increase support for agricultural research in Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia.

- ACTION 2a. Provide greater external support for agricultural scientists working in the national agricultural research systems of selected countries in Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia.
- ACTION 2b. Provide greater support to agricultural research conducted at the international centers of the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research.
- ACTION 2c. Provide greater support for collaborative research between scientists from Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia and scientists at U.S. universities.
- ACTION 2d. Create a competitive award fund to provide an incentive for high-impact agricultural innovations to help poor farmers in Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia.

RECOMMENDATION 3: Increase support for rural and agricultural infrastructure, especially in Sub-Saharan Africa.

- ACTION 3a. Encourage a revival of World Bank lending for agricultural infrastructure in Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia, including lending for transport corridors, rural energy, clean water, irrigation, and farm-to-market roads.
- ACTION 3b. Accelerate disbursement of the Millennium Challenge Corporation funds already obligated for rural roads and other agricultural infrastructure projects in Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia.

RECOMMENDATION 4: Improve the national and international institutions that deliver agricultural development assistance.

- ACTION 4a. Restore the leadership role of USAID.
- ACTION 4b. Rebuild USAID's in-house capacity to develop and administer agricultural development assistance programs.

- ACTION 4c. Improve interagency coordination for America’s agricultural development assistance efforts.
- ACTION 4d. Strengthen the capacity of the U.S. Congress to partner in managing agricultural development assistance policy.
- ACTION 4e. Improve the performance of international agricultural development and food institutions, most notably the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations.

RECOMMENDATION 5: Improve U.S. policies currently seen as harmful to agricultural development abroad.

- ACTION 5a. Improve America’s food aid policies.
- ACTION 5b. Repeal current restrictions on agricultural development assistance that might lead to more agricultural production for export in poor countries in possible competition with U.S. exports.
- ACTION 5c. Review USAID’s long-standing objection to any use of targeted subsidies (such as vouchers) to reduce the cost to poor farmers of key inputs such as improved seeds and fertilizers.
- ACTION 5d. Revive international negotiations aimed at reducing trade-distorting policies, including trade-distorting agricultural subsidies.
- ACTION 5e. Adopt biofuels policies that place greater emphasis on market forces and on the use of nonfood feedstocks.

The estimated total cost to the U.S. budget of the recommended actions in The Chicago Initiative is \$340 million in the first year, increasing to \$1.03 billion by year five and continuing at that level through year ten. Projected first-year costs are only 1.5 percent of the current annual U.S. official development assistance (ODA) budget of \$21.8 billion. By year five costs would still only be 4.75 percent of current U.S. ODA.

PART III—PLAN OF ACTION: PUBLIC SUPPORT AND KEY STEPS

American Support for this Initiative

The American people will offer strong support for this Initiative. We know this from the results of two independent surveys commissioned by The Chicago Council on Global Affairs in the autumn of 2008. In these surveys both the public at large and a small but diverse sample of American leaders offered strong support for energetic U.S. action to reduce rural hunger and poverty in developing countries.

Action Priorities

The most logical starting point for implementing The Chicago Initiative are the actions under Recommendation 4 on improving institutions that deliver agricultural development assistance. These actions can be taken entirely within the executive branch at the direction of the new president.

The president should first make clear the administration's intent to give high priority to agriculture in U.S. development policy, a message that should be echoed by key members of his cabinet, in particular the secretary of state. The administration should then move quickly to restore the leadership role of USAID (Action 4a) and create an Interagency Council on Global Agriculture (Action 4c). This council would then provide the appropriate interagency venue for ensuring action on the other executive branch actions recommended in The Chicago Initiative.

The actions that require congressional appropriations are a critically needed but modest down payment on U.S. support for agricultural development. They should also be undertaken in 2009 and will depend on strong leadership from both ends of Pennsylvania Avenue.

A Catalyst for Public-Private Partnership

It is important that The Chicago Initiative not be understood simply as a U.S. government program. Indeed, the recommendations extend far beyond the governmental sector. Their greatest promise derives precisely from the fact that foreign governments and nongovernmental institutions will be engaged, including universities, private companies, development organizations, and private philanthropies.

The Gain from Immediate Action and the Cost of Further Delay

It will take time for most of the recommended actions of The Chicago Initiative to produce their full impact on the ground. This is why there is no time to waste in getting started. Bringing agriculture back to the center of U.S. development policy will open a path to partnerships with the peoples and nations of Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia, whose futures are crucial to the prospects for global peace and prosperity in the twenty-first century. New U.S. priorities and policies can strengthen cooperation with other developed nations and with international institutions in the service of shared goals. Increasing rural incomes will over time support social and political progress in Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia and advance the national security interests of the United States. Overall, The Chicago Initiative will align America with the forces of positive change to meet the most basic of human needs and most lofty of human aspirations.