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United States Government Accountability Office
Washington, DC 20548

July 17, 2008

Congressional Requesters

Subject: *Food Insecurity Persists in Sub-Saharan Africa despite Efforts to Halve Hunger by 2015*

At the 1996 World Food Summit (WFS) in Rome, the United States and more than 180 world leaders pledged to halve the total number of undernourished people worldwide from the 1990 level¹—a commitment that they reaffirmed in 2000 when they established the Millennium Development Goals (MDG), which included a target to halve the proportion or the percentage of the world’s population that is undernourished by 2015. More than a decade later, however, the number of undernourished people has not decreased significantly, and about 850 million people, including 170 million children, remain undernourished, according to the United Nations (UN) Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). Furthermore, the number of undernourished people in sub-Saharan Africa has increased from about 170 million in the period of 1990 to 1992 to over 200 million in the period of 2001 to 2003.²

Since early 2007, food-related riots have occurred in 15 countries, including 7 in sub-Saharan Africa, leading both the UN Secretary-General and the head of the World Food Program (WFP) to express concern about the impact of chronic undernourishment, or food insecurity, on world peace and security.³ In January 2008, world leaders meeting in Davos, Switzerland, for the World Economic Forum predicted that food insecurity would be among the top potential threats to the world economy this year and for decades to come. In April 2008, the President of the World Bank called for a *New Deal for a Global Food Policy* that would involve a combination of long-term efforts to boost agricultural productivity in developing countries and short-term emergency aid to address immediate food crises.

¹The United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) defines “undernourishment” as the condition of people whose food consumption is continuously below a minimum dietary energy requirement for maintaining an acceptable minimum body size, living a healthy life, and carrying out light physical activity. While we recognize that there are different technical definitions for “chronic undernourishment,” “food insecurity,” and “hunger,” we use these terms interchangeably in this report.

²In its report entitled *The State of Food and Agriculture* (2006), FAO reported undernourishment estimates for 39 countries in sub-Saharan Africa: 6 countries in Central Africa, 8 in East Africa, 11 in southern Africa, and 14 in West Africa. FAO makes a composite estimate for countries for which it lacks country-level data and uses that estimate in developing its overall undernourishment estimates for sub-Saharan Africa. FAO uses the average of the period of 1990 to 1992 as the baseline in measuring progress toward the WFS goal, and its most recent official statistics available for undernourishment are for the period of 2001 to 2003.

³Between January 2007 and April 2008, 15 countries reported food riots and protests, according to WFP. These countries are Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Côte d’Ivoire, Egypt, Guinea, Haiti, India, Indonesia, Italy, Mauritania, Mexico, Morocco, Mozambique, Senegal, and Yemen.

We recently examined (1) factors that contribute to persistent food insecurity in sub-Saharan Africa and (2) the extent to which host governments and donors, including the United States, are working toward halving hunger in the region by 2015. In May 2008, we reported on these issues⁴ as follows:

- Chronic undernourishment (food insecurity) in sub-Saharan Africa persists primarily due to low agricultural productivity, limited rural development, government policy disincentives, and the impact of poor health on the agricultural workforce. Additional factors, including rising global commodity prices and climate change, will likely further exacerbate food insecurity in the region.
- The efforts of host governments and donors, including the United States, to achieve the goal of halving hunger in sub-Saharan Africa by 2015 have thus far been insufficient.
 - Some host governments have not prioritized food security as a development goal.
 - Donors have reduced the priority given to agriculture and their efforts have been further hampered by difficulties in coordination and deficiencies in measuring and monitoring progress.
 - Limited agricultural development resources and a fragmented approach have impaired U.S. efforts to reduce hunger in Africa. U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) funding to address food insecurity in Africa has been primarily for emergency food aid, which has been crucial in helping to alleviate food crises but has not addressed the underlying factors that contributed to the recurrence and severity of these crises. The United States' principal strategy for meeting its commitment to halve hunger in Africa, the Presidential Initiative to End Hunger in Africa (IEHA), is limited to some of USAID's agricultural development activities and does not integrate other U.S. agencies' agricultural development assistance to the region.

In our May 2008 report, we recommended that the Administrator of USAID (1) work in collaboration with the Secretaries of State, Agriculture, and the Treasury to develop an integrated governmentwide U.S. strategy that defines each agency's actions and resource commitments toward achieving food security in sub-Saharan Africa, including improving collaboration with host governments and other donors and developing improved measures to monitor and evaluate progress toward the implementation of this strategy, and (2) report on progress toward the implementation of this recommendation as part of the annual *U.S. International Food Assistance Report* submitted to Congress.⁵

⁴GAO, *International Food Security: Insufficient Efforts by Host Governments and Donors Threaten Progress to Halve Hunger in Sub-Saharan Africa by 2015*, [GAO-08-680](#) (Washington, D.C.: May 29, 2008).

⁵Pub. L. No. 480, section 407(f), states that "the President shall prepare an annual report concerning the programs and activities implemented under this law for the preceding fiscal year." The *U.S. International Food Assistance Report*, which USAID prepares and submits to Congress annually, provides a report on USAID and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) international food assistance programs that are aimed at reducing food insecurity.

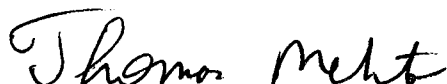
We provided drafts of our May 2008 report to USAID and the Departments of Agriculture, State, and Treasury. USAID concurred with the first recommendation but expressed concerns about the vehicle of the annual reporting, asserting that the International Food Assistance Report (IFAR) is not the appropriate vehicle for reporting on the progress of the implementation of our first recommendation. USAID suggested that a report such as the annual progress report on IEHA (which is not congressionally required) would be more appropriate. We disagreed because we believe that the congressionally required annual IFAR would, in fact, be an appropriate vehicle for reporting on USAID's and other U.S. agencies' implementation of our first recommendation. Public Law 480, section 407(f) (codified at 7 U.S.C. 1736a(f)) requires that the President prepare an annual report that "shall include. . .an assessment of the progress toward achieving food security in each country receiving food assistance from the United States Government." The IFAR is intended to contain a discussion of food security efforts by U.S. agencies.

The Departments of Agriculture and the Treasury generally concurred with the findings, while State identified additional issues for consideration, which we addressed in our report as appropriate.

To examine the factors that contribute to food insecurity in sub-Saharan Africa, we analyzed U.S. and international agency documents and conducted structured panel discussions with experts and practitioners in four African countries and Washington, D.C. To examine the extent to which host governments and donors, including the United States, are working toward halving hunger in the region by 2015, we reviewed data on official development assistance to developing countries, government expenditure data, and USAID data on the Presidential Initiative to End Hunger in Africa. We conducted this performance audit from April 2007 to May 2008 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives.

We are sending copies of this report to the co-chairs of the House Hunger Caucus and interested congressional committees. We will also make copies available to others upon request. In addition, the report will be available at no charge on GAO's Web site at <http://www.gao.gov>.

If you or your staff have any questions about this report, please contact me at (202) 512-9601 or melitot@gao.gov. Contact points for our Offices of Congressional Relations and Public Affairs may be found on the last page of this report. GAO staff who made major contributions to this report are listed in enclosure II.



Thomas Melito
Director, International Affairs and Trade

Enclosures

List of Congressional Requesters

The Honorable JoAnn Emerson
Co-Chair
The Honorable Ray LaHood
Co-Chair
The Honorable James P. McGovern
Co-Chair
The Honorable Jerry Moran
Co-Chair
The Honorable Earl Pomeroy
Co-Chair
The Honorable Hilda Solis
Co-Chair
House Hunger Caucus
House of Representatives

Enclosure I: Briefing for Congressional Requesters



Food Insecurity Persists in Sub-Saharan Africa Despite Efforts to Halve Hunger by 2015

GAO-08-1007R
July 17, 2008

Source: GAO (photos).



Objectives

To answer the following questions:

- What factors have contributed to persistent food insecurity in sub-Saharan Africa?
 - To what extent are host governments and donors, including the United States, working toward halving world hunger by 2015?
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Scope and Methodology

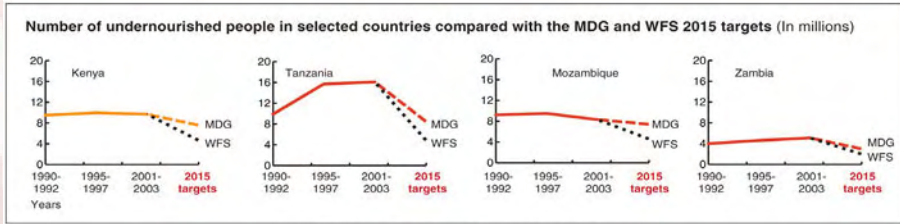
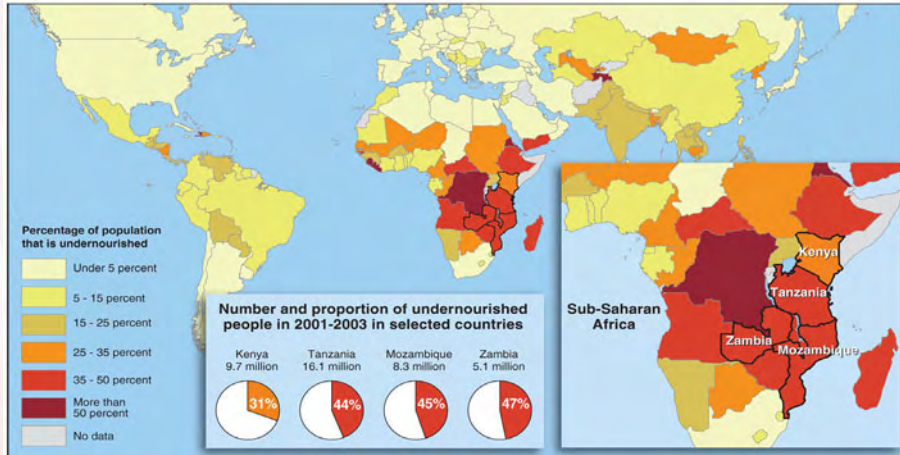
- **Analyzed data, reviewed documents, and interviewed officials** from USAID, USDA, State, Treasury, and the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC)
 - **Reviewed professional literature** on food security issues
 - **Conducted fieldwork in four countries:** Kenya and Tanzania (East Africa) and Mozambique and Zambia (southern Africa)
 - **Convened structured group discussions** of nongovernmental organizations (NGO), donors, experts, and practitioners during fieldwork and in Washington, D.C.
 - **Conducted work in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards** from April 2007 to May 2008
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Background

- About 850 million people are undernourished, according to the Food and Agriculture Organization.
 - Sub-Saharan Africa has the highest proportion of undernourished people in the world.
 - Since early 2007, food-related riots have occurred in 15 countries, including 7 in sub-Saharan Africa.
 - In January 2008, the World Economic Forum predicted that food insecurity would be among the top potential threats to the world economy.
 - In April 2008, the President of the World Bank called for a New Deal for a Global Food Policy.
-

Prevalence of Undernourishment in the World (2001-2003) and Progress Needed to Halve Hunger in Selected Sub-Saharan African Countries by 2015



MDG
Millennium Development Goals
WFS
World Food Summit

Sources: GAO analysis of Food and Agriculture Organization data; Map Resources (map).

Multiple Factors Contribute to Persistent Food Insecurity in Sub-Saharan Africa



Source: GAO analysis of literature review and structured discussions. GAO (photos)



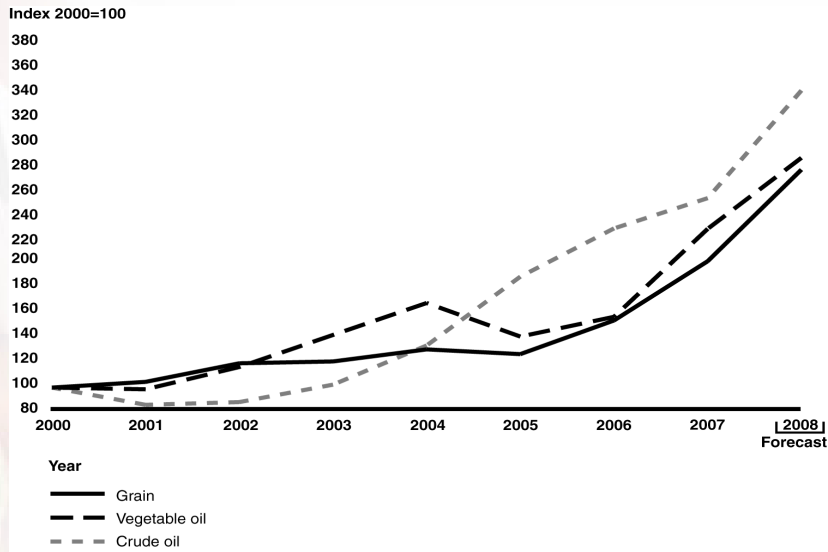
Food Insecurity Persists in Sub-Saharan Africa Due to Several Factors, Including Low Agricultural Productivity

- **Limited agricultural productivity**
Example: Grain yield in sub-Saharan Africa has increased by only 1 percent annually while it has increased by 2.5 percent annually in the rest of the world. By 2006, the yield in sub-Saharan Africa was only about 40 percent of that of the rest of the world's developing countries.
 - **Limited rural development**
Example: Rural development in sub-Saharan Africa has suffered from weak infrastructure, such as lack of rural telecommunications, electricity, and roads, as well as farmers' lack of access to credit.
 - **Government policy disincentives**
Example: Tanzanian farmers must pay about 55 taxes, levies, and fees to sell their agricultural products, equivalent to 50 percent of the products' price.
 - **Poor health**
Example: The human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) has taken a heavy toll on the population, workforce, and agricultural production of sub-Saharan Africa; two-thirds of those in the world who have HIV live in that region.
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Rising Commodity Prices and Climate Change Will Likely Exacerbate Food Insecurity in Sub-Saharan Africa

Changes in Commodity Prices, 2000 to 2008



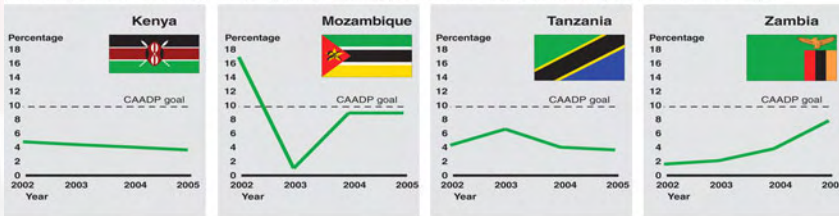
Source: GAO analysis of International Monetary Fund World Economic Outlook Database (April 2008) data.

Additional factors that will likely exacerbate food insecurity

- Rising global commodity prices
- Increased demand for biofuel
- Adverse impacts of climate change

Host Government Efforts Hampered by Limited Prioritization, Low Agricultural Spending, and Weak Capacity of Government Institutions

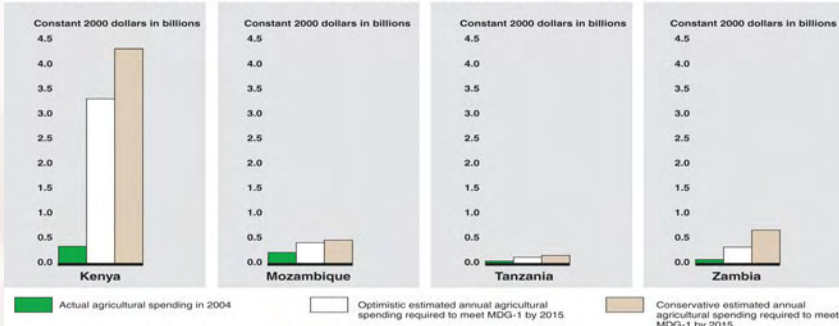
Annual agricultural spending (2002-2005) as a percentage of total government spending compared with CAADP goal



Host governments

- Limited prioritization
- Low agricultural spending
- Weak capacity of government institutions

2004 agricultural spending compared with annual spending required to halve hunger by 2015



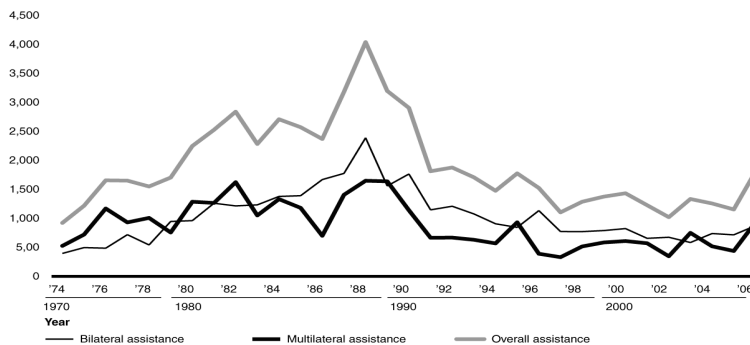
Sources: GAO analysis of International Food Policy Research Institute data; Nova Development (Art Explosion).

Note: In 2003, the African Union endorsed the implementation of the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Program (CAADP), a framework to guide countries' agricultural development efforts, and agreed to allocate 10 percent of government spending to agriculture by 2008.



Donor Efforts Limited by Declining Resources, Difficulties in Coordination, and Deficiencies in Undernourishment Estimates

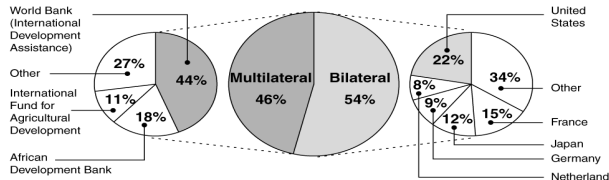
Actual ODA to agriculture for Africa (constant 2006 U.S. dollars in millions)



Donors

- Declining resources
- Difficulties in coordination
- Deficiencies in undernourishment estimates

Over the last 3 decades, bilateral contributions of ODA to agriculture for Africa have exceeded multilateral contributions. The United States has provided the largest share of bilateral ODA to agriculture for Africa, while the World Bank has provided the largest share of multilateral ODA to agriculture for Africa.



Source: GAO analysis of Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (Development Assistance Committee) data.

ODA
Official Development Assistance

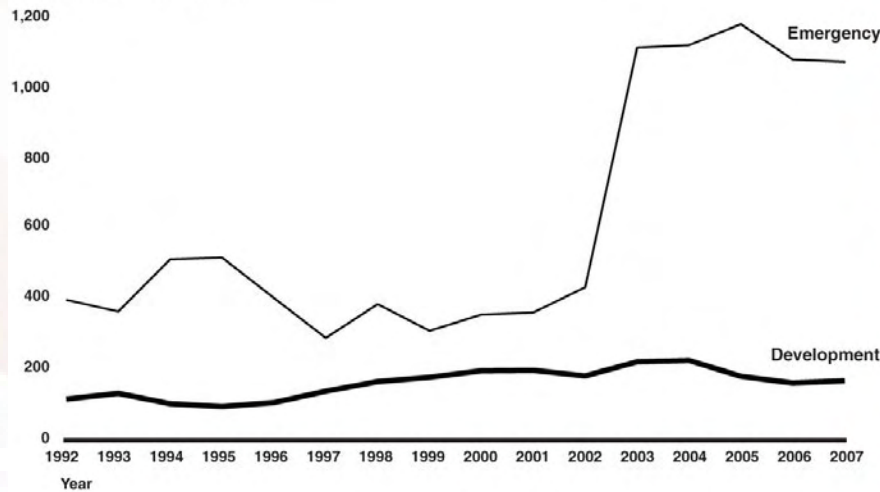


U.S. Efforts to End Hunger in Africa Impaired by Limited Agricultural Development Resources and a Fragmented Approach

The United States

- USAID funding for emergency food aid versus development food aid
- Presidential Initiative to End Hunger in Africa (IEHA)

Constant 2007 dollars in millions



Sources: GAO analysis of U.S. Agency for International Development data; GAO (photos).



Recommendations

We recommended that the Administrator of USAID take two actions:

- work in collaboration with the Secretaries of State, Agriculture, and the Treasury to develop an integrated governmentwide U.S. strategy that defines each agency's actions and resource commitments toward achieving food security in sub-Saharan Africa, including improving collaboration with host governments and other donors and developing improved measures to monitor and evaluate progress toward the implementation of this strategy, and
 - prepare and submit, as part of the annual U.S. International Food Assistance Report, an annual report to Congress on progress toward the implementation of this recommendation.
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Agency Comments and Report Issuance

- USAID, USDA, and State provided written agency comments
USAID concurred with our first recommendation but expressed concerns about the vehicle of the annual reporting. The Department of Agriculture generally concurred with our findings, while State identified additional issues for consideration.
 - FAO, International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), MCC, Treasury, UNDP, the World Bank, and WFP provided technical comments
 - Report issued May 29, 2008 (GAO-08-680)
 - Report available at <http://www.gao.gov>
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Enclosure II: GAO Contact and Staff Acknowledgments

GAO Contact

Thomas Melito, (202) 512-9601 or melitot@gao.gov

Staff Acknowledgments

In addition to the person named above, Phillip J. Thomas (Assistant Director), Carol Bray, Ming Chen, Debbie Chung, Martin De Alteriis, Leah DeWolf, Mark Dowling, Etana Finkler, Katrina Greaves, Joy Labez, Julia A. Roberts, and Kendall Schaefer made key contributions to this report.

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