

A NEW APPROACH TO GLOBAL FOOD SECURITY AND HUNGER

By Hillary Rodham Clinton

For one billion people around the world, the daily effort to grow, buy, or sell food is the defining struggle of their lives. This matters to them, and to all of us.

Consider the daily life of the world's typical small farmer.

She lives in a rural village in Sub-Saharan Africa, Asia, or Latin America, and farms a piece of land that she does not own. She rises before dawn and walks miles to collect water. She works all day in a field, sometimes with a baby strapped on her back.

If she's lucky, drought, blight, or pests don't destroy her crops, and she raises enough to feed her family. She may even have some left over to sell. But there's no road to the nearest market and no one there who can afford to buy from her.

Now let's consider the life of a young man in a crowded city 100 miles from that farmer. He has no job—or a job that pays pennies. He goes to the market—but the food is rotting, or priced beyond reach. He is hungry, and often angry.

She has extra food to sell, and he wants to buy it. But that simple transaction can't take place because of complex forces beyond their control.

Meeting the challenge of global hunger is at the heart of what we call “food security”—empowering the world's farmers to sow and harvest plentiful crops, effectively care for livestock or catch fish—and then ensuring that the food they produce reaches people most in need.

Food security is not only about food. It represents the convergence of complex issues: droughts and floods caused by climate change, swings in the global economy that affect food prices and threaten the fate of vital infrastructure projects, and spikes in the price of oil that increase transportation costs.

But food security is all about security. Chronic hunger poses a threat to the stability of governments, societies, and borders. People who are starving or undernourished, have no incomes, and can't care for their families are left with feelings of hopelessness and despair. That desperation can lead to tension, conflict, and even violence. Since 2007, there have been riots over food in more than 60 countries.

And the failures of farming in many parts of the world—the obstacles that separate that small farmer and that hungry young man—have a powerful impact on the global economy. Farming is the only or primary source of income for more than three-quarters of the world's poor. When so much of humankind works hard every day but still can't support their families, the whole world is held back.

The Obama Administration sees chronic hunger as a key priority of our foreign policy. Other countries are joining us in this effort. Major industrialized nations have committed more than \$22 billion over three years to spur agriculture-led economic growth. And on September 26, UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon and I co-hosted a gathering of leaders from more than 130 countries to build international support.

The U.S. approach to food security will be informed by our experience with development. The truth is, we have spent too many years and too much money on development projects that have not yielded lasting results. But we have learned from these efforts. We know that the most effective strategies emanate from those closest to the problems, not foreign governments or institutions thousands of miles away. And we know that development works best when it is seen not as aid but as investment.

With those lessons in mind, our food security initiative will be guided by five principles, which will help us get to the roots of the problem and pursue lasting change.

First, we understand that there is no one-size-fits-all model for agriculture. So we will work with partner countries to create and implement their plans.

Second, we will address the underlying causes of hunger by investing in everything from better seeds to risk-sharing programs to protect small farmers. And since the majority of the world's farmers are women, it's critical that our investments in agriculture leverage their ambition and perseverance.

Third, no one entity can eradicate hunger on its own. But if stakeholders work together—coordinating on the country, regional, and global levels—our impact can multiply.

Fourth, multilateral institutions have the reach and resources that extend beyond any one country. By supporting their efforts, we will benefit from their expertise.

Lastly, we pledge long-term commitment and accountability. To prove it, we will invest in monitoring and evaluation tools that will allow the public to see what we have done.

This effort may take years, even decades, before we reach the finish line. But we pledge our full resources and energies.

While we pursue this effort, we will maintain our deep commitment to emergency food assistance, to answer the urgent cry for help when tragedies and disasters take their toll—as is happening now in the Horn of Africa, where drought, crop failures, and civil war have caused the worst humanitarian crisis in 18 years.

Revitalizing global agriculture will not be easy. In fact, it is one of the most ambitious and comprehensive diplomacy and development efforts our country has ever undertaken. But it can be done. It is worth doing. And if we succeed, our future will be more prosperous and more peaceful than our past.