

Chairman Russ Carnahan
Subcommittee on International Organizations, Human Rights and Oversight

Opening Statement
“Oversight of the Feed the Future Initiative”

July 20, 2010

I grew up on a family farm in Rolla, Missouri. As a kid, the first time I loaded bales of hay on the family truck all of the hay fell out. But from that point on, I learned that you have to build a strong foundation.

I am pleased that today we are able to talk about the strong foundation we are building to address global hunger and food security with the Administration’s Feed the Future Initiative.

At the G8 Summit in L’Aquila, Italy, in July, 2009, global leaders committed to “act with the scale and urgency needed to achieve sustainable global food security.” President Obama pledged at least \$3.5 billion for agricultural development and food security over three years, which has helped to leverage \$22 billion in international funding.

This is a moral issue: Today, more than one billion people—nearly one-sixth of the world's population—suffer from chronic hunger. Each year, more than 3.5 million children die from under nutrition.

But fighting hunger is not only a moral issue. Fighting hunger also creates good Missouri jobs.

In my home state of Missouri, agricultural exports support about 37,000 jobs both on the farm and off the farm in food processing, storage, and transportation. Through emergency food aid programs, U.S. farmers have benefitted economically from donating surplus U.S. food. Under the Feed the Future framework, the goal is to build the capacity for poorer economies to produce and purchase local agriculture supplies, as well as trade on the international market.

The talented employees of Missouri organizations such as Monsanto, the Danforth Plant Science Center, the Missouri Botanical Garden, and our local universities are working with farmers and research institutions to increase yields and incomes in Africa, Latin America and Asia.

This will have a long-term benefit to the U.S. economy. Growing middle classes in foreign countries will buy more U.S. products, and that’s good for Missouri’s farmers and businesses, as well as farmers and businesses throughout America who are the bedrock of our economic foundation.

“Feeding the future,” the goal of this initiative, will be no easy task. By 2050, the population is expected to reach 9 billion. To feed the growing population, farmers will need to produce more food in the next 40 years than they have in the past 10,000 years combined.

We must catalyze research and innovation to meet this challenge. We will need to focus on breeding, biotechnology, and agronomic practices. Some African producers are reluctant to use biotechnology

due to concerns that some countries in Europe—one of Africa’s primary export destinations—will not accept genetically modified food. We must use “smart power” through our diplomatic and trade missions to end these unfair trade restrictions.

The International Organizations, Human Rights and Oversight Subcommittee hosted a hearing on “Women as Agents of Change” last month. Women farmers produce more than half of all the food that is grown in the world. It is often cited that women farmers produce up to 80 percent of food in Africa, and 60 percent of food in Asia. Women are far more likely than men to spend their income improving their families’ access to health, education, and nutrition. This initiative is unprecedented in its focus on lifting the incomes of women, which another critical element to raising people out of poverty, creating sustainable job and ensuring global security. I look forward to hearing more about how the metrics will be disaggregated by gender.

As the Administration prepares to invest \$3.5 billion in taxpayer resources over three years, I am also concerned about the potential for waste, fraud, and abuse. As Chairman of the International Organizations, Human Rights and Oversight Subcommittee, I have seen far too little contracting and grants management, and far too much corruption and waste. I appreciate the “Whole of Government” approach of this initiative: The Department of State, USAID, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Treasury, the U.S. Trade Representative, and the Millennium Challenge Account all working together.

However, based on previous oversight hearings and stories of “ad hoc” out of control, I am skeptical about the ability of these different agencies to align resources, avoid duplication, conduct internal oversight and successfully manage the taxpayer’s dollars.

In order to get the most bang for the taxpayers’ buck, there is a need for a strong monitoring and evaluation system. In his speech on May 20, 2010, Administrator Shah said this initiative will reach 40 million people over 10 years, increasing their incomes by more than 10 percent a year. And the United States Government expects to reach 25 million children directly with nutritional interventions that will prevent stunting in 10 million kids. These are bold and worthy goals, but I look forward to seeing how progress will be measured and reported.

I applaud the initiative of the Administration on this critical issue. After my initial failure at stacking the hay on our truck in Rolla, Missouri, I want to make sure that the foundation being laid for our future is secure and sound.

I will now turn to Chairman of the Subcommittee on Africa and Global Health, The Honorable Donald Payne, for his opening statement.