



## Feed the Future Country Fact Sheet

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## Press Conference by David Lane, U.S. Ambassador to the UN Food and Agriculture Agencies in Rome

*The following is an excerpt from remarks by David Lane, U.S. Ambassador to the UN Food and Agriculture Agencies in Rome, at a press conference in Phnom Penh, Cambodia. [Read his full remarks](#) on the USUN Rome website.*

U.S. President Barack Obama has made ending extreme poverty and hunger in our lifetime a top priority of his Administration. Through Feed the Future, the U.S. Government's primary food security and hunger initiative, we have learned a lot about what is needed to increase agricultural productivity, to ensure access to safe and nutritious food, to facilitate training and financing to enable smallholder farmers to adopt new technologies, and to develop market linkages in order to raise small-holder farmer incomes.

Cambodia's economic growth over the last decade has been truly impressive, and I understand that the economy is expected to grow another seven percent next year. It is crucial that smallholder farmers and their families benefit from the great economic strides that are being made. Agriculture accounts for 30% of the country's gross domestic product. When you include Cambodians working in fisheries and forestry, nearly five million people work in the agricultural sector, making it the largest source of employment in the country. Yet one in five rural Cambodians are living under the official poverty line, with a similar number teetering just above the threshold. Two out of five are malnourished, which robs individuals of social and economic potential. As we talked with farmers, we were reminded of their desire to improve their own lives and the lives of their children. We have also seen that the best projects are those in which the goals and activities of the Cambodian people, the U.S. government, and the international community work in alignment.

My reflections and learnings from this trip that I would like to share with you today will focus on three key areas:

- Ensuring access to enough healthy food for the most vulnerable populations;
- Improving nutrition, especially during the critical period before a child is two years old, which means targeting interventions to pregnant and lactating women and young children; and
- Facilitating dissemination and adoption of well-proven technologies and innovations, in order to move farmers beyond subsistence farming to commercial production.

Too many Cambodians do not have access to enough nutritious food to lead healthy and productive lives. Several programs are working to address this.

The World Food Program and USAID have collaborated with the local population to help them survive particularly difficult times through payment for work on important projects to improve their infrastructure. The road connecting Peanea Village to the nearest town was damaged in the 2011 floods. By paying villagers during the lean season for work to rehabilitate and improve the quality of the road, the program not only provided badly needed income to buy food, but also enhanced their ability to survive future shocks, such as another flood.

A School Meals Program at Wat Run primary school encourages children to attend school regularly by providing breakfast for the students. But many children in Cambodia still drop out after grade 3, as their labor is needed to help support the family. To enable families to keep their children in school longer, WFP offers scholarships to the poorest school children in grades 4 to 6, providing food or cash to purchase food, as long as the child continues in school. The U.S. Department of Agriculture's McGovern-Dole Food and Nutrition Program supports the effort by providing much of the food. The families who benefit also contribute supplies and labor.

Other programs also work to ensure that Cambodia's children and youth are well-nourished, so that they can develop into healthy adults who will be prepared to lead Cambodia in the years to come.

