



Feed the Future Country Fact Sheet

Online Version: <https://www.feedthefuture.gov/article/remarks-administrator-rajiv-shah-agribusiness-club-luncheon>

Remarks by Administrator Rajiv Shah to the Agribusiness Club Luncheon

It's a pleasure to join you this afternoon. The companies and organizations you represent—from Syngenta to Land O'Lakes—are increasingly playing a vital and vibrant role in global development.

Just yesterday, in fact, I was at a meeting at the White House with some of the world's leading CEOs, including Mike Duke from Walmart and Paul Polman from Unilever.

Together with more than 400 companies in the Consumer Goods Forum, we've created the Tropical Forest Alliance to green their supply chains and end tropical deforestation by 2020.

In many ways, global public-private partnerships like TFA 2020 reflect a transformational shift that has occurred in development over the last few decades.

Thirty years ago, the official development community was almost exclusively composed of international organizations like the World Bank and government agencies like USAID.

But today, we live in a very different world.

Private investment in emerging economies has grown to dwarf official development assistance. And new technologies—perhaps most notably the mobile phone—have transformed the lives of billions of people in the farthest corners of the globe.

In the last 15 years, the development community has dramatically expanded. It now includes innovators at universities—who have designed microscopes that attach to iPhones to diagnose malaria and solar-powered micro-grids to give children a light to read by at night.

It includes philanthropists like Bill Gates and Mo Ibrahim, who have studied these issues deeply and can bring their private sector expertise to bear on solving challenges.

And it includes banks and companies like Citi, Dupont, and Cargill who are increasingly seeking high risk, high return investments in some of the toughest parts of our world.

Taken together, these extraordinary new trends—the emergence of new technologies and the growth of our community—have transformed what's possible to achieve in development.

For the first time in history, we can envision the end of extreme poverty—a goal so big and important I know that it is easy to be skeptical.

But the truth is that it is within our reach even as we speak.

In the last twenty years, child mortality rates have fallen by 42 percent and poverty rates by 52 percent. Since 1999, in fact, the total number of extreme poor has declined by nearly 50 million people every year on average.

And lest you think this is a phenomenon largely confined to China, consider what happened in 2005, when—for the first time on record—poverty rates began falling in every region of the world, including Africa.

In recognition of this moment, President Obama called on the nation in his State of the Union to help end extreme poverty and its most devastating consequences: child hunger and child death. And to do it in two decades.

Extreme poverty is not a precise measure of income or calories per day, but the denial of basic freedoms and dignity.

Dignity comes from providing a meal for your child or the freedom from believing your children is likely to die before their 5th birthday.

Now despite this unprecedented opportunity, development agencies have not always been nimble or focused enough to capture their full potential.

That's because, in part, we are used to thinking about development simply as paying for services and infrastructure in developing countries, whether it's building roads or delivering vaccines.

And America has a proud history of development assistance—serving as the largest bilateral donor in the world in everything from global health to education.

But we cannot pay our way out of extreme poverty.

We need a new model that harnesses the ingenuity of a growing community of innovators and entrepreneurs with new partnerships and a greater emphasis on results.

At USAID, we are taking this approach to scale across our work—from child survival to access to power—but I wanted to take the opportunity today to highlight what this means for our core work to end hunger and malnutrition around the world.

When President Obama took office, the world was mired in the midst of a food, fuel, and financial crisis that brought millions of people back to the brink of poverty.

As one of his first foreign policy acts of his presidency, President Obama launched a major global effort called Feed the Future to end hunger through business, science, and partnership.

In June, on his visit to Senegal, the President met a woman named Nimna, who helped bring 3,000 small-scale producers together through Feed the Future.

As one cooperative, they can obtain better access to credit and modern farm equipment, including tractors.

While the President was there, in fact, Senegal became the 10th country to join the New Alliance for Food Security and Nutrition—a groundbreaking model of partnership that matches commitments from African governments to reform with commitments from companies to invest.

In one year, the New Alliance has grown into a \$3.75 billion public-private partnership that has encouraged reforms from ten African governments and commitments from more than 70 companies, including some represented today.

In Ethiopia, DuPont recently opened a state-of-the-art seed processing plant and warehouse to support 35,000 smallholder maize farmers—a step they took after the country reformed its seed market and land titling policies.

In Tanzania, Yara International has started construction on a fertilizer terminal at the nation's largest port—again a step they took after the country lifted their food export ban.

Ultimately, we want to see these kinds of investments take root across the continent, underpinning a thriving agriculture sector that connects farmers everywhere to markets.

In the last year alone, Feed the Future helped 7 million farmers transform their farms and reached 12 million children the nutritional support they need to grow and thrive.

But we know that there is much more we need to do.

Game-changing investments and technologies only actually change the game when they reach farmers and are adopted into everyday use.

But despite having many of the technologies today that can help farmers adapt to a changing climate, we continue to see that they are not getting to farmers.

The main hybrid maize in use today in Kenya dates from 1986. In Ghana, the main open-pollinated maize variety dates from the 1980s. And fertilizer use in Africa remains the lowest in the world.

To change this reality and ensure that farmers can take advantage of the very cutting-edge in agriculture, we are developing country-specific plans to scale up transformational technologies, including climate-resilient rice, deep placement fertilizer, and orange-fleshed sweet potato.

The orange-fleshed sweet potato, for example, has 50 percent of the total Vitamin A requirement for young children.

That's a critical tool in the fight against undernutrition, which leads to more child deaths every year than any other disease.

We're also not just talking about scaling up seeds.

Groundbreaking weather-based index insurance can protect pastoralists against the loss of their herds and help keep families in their communities instead of in refugee camps during a drought.

And new mobile phone apps for farmers can provide access to real-time market prices and extension support from thousands of miles away.

In Mozambique, for example, we're offering farmers the opportunity to pre-pay for fertilizer using mobile money right after harvest season, when farmers have money on hand.

At the end of the day, we know that the challenges we face from a changing climate will only get worse—and our solutions will have to be more nimble, flexible, and efficient than ever before.

It was only a few weeks ago that Typhoon Haiyan slammed into the Philippines with the strength of one of the most powerful storms ever to hit land.

We swung into action—airlifting 55 tons of high-energy biscuits from Miami and buying enough rice locally in the Philippines to help feed those in need immediately.

But the bulk of our food aid—which will absolutely be needed in the months ahead—is still on a ship headed to the Philippines.

Meanwhile, halfway around the world, we see the need for life-saving aid grow more pressing by the day in Syria—where the severity of the conflict makes importing large quantities of food aid dangerous and impossible.

The truth is that the world has changed since President Eisenhower was in the White House, when American farmers first began shipping their surpluses abroad to feed hungry families recovering from war in Europe.

Since then, we've developed new tools—like local procurement and electronic payments—that we can use in tandem with American food to meet the needs of a much more complex world.

But despite having the tools, we remain limited in our ability to use them. This past year, we sought to modernize our food aid program to pair the continued purchase of American food aid with the flexibility to use new cutting-edge tools.

This more agile approach will feed an additional 4 million children a year, while creating new and enduring partnerships with American agribusinesses and manufactures.

Far from ending a partnership with our world-class food system, we are recommitting to the role that American agriculture has always played in advancing our nation's proud history as the world's humanitarian leader.

I wanted to conclude with a story from my visit to a factory in Providence, Rhode Island called Edesia, where 50 employees were making a high-energy peanut paste to feed starving children from Somalia to Syria.

What's remarkable is that this factory and its jobs didn't exist 10 years ago.

They are the result of a decade of research that USAID helped support to dramatically improve the science of saving lives.

The Mayor of Providence and the entire Rhode Island delegation joined me on the visit to the factory—which sources most of its ingredients from the United States and plans to double their operations.

I leave you with this story because Edesia is not an outlier.

All of you represent companies and organizations that our part of our nation's rich tradition of innovation and partnership in agriculture...

...from President Lincoln's momentous Land Grant Act that established the foundation for the most productive agricultural economy the world had ever seen....

... to President Kennedy's efforts to reshape Food for Peace into a program that would feed a billion people around the

world...

...to President Obama's announcement of the New Alliance for Food Security and Nutrition at the G8 Summit at Camp David.

As heirs of this proud history, we look to you today to serve champions for a new approach that brings business, science, and partnership to bear against the greatest challenges of our time.

Thank you.

The transcript of these remarks originally [appeared](#) on the USAID website.