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From: Mills, Cheryl D <MillsCD@state.gov>
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Subject: Fw: Pres of Oxfam on FTF and food policies

From: Huang, Cindy Y
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To: Mills, Cheryl D
Cc: Shrier, Jonathan
Subject: Pres of Oxfam on FTF and food policies

Cheryl, The Pres of Oxfam writing on FTF and food policies for thehill.com. Very good marks for FTF, with criticism of domestic ag policies and US preferences on shipping food aid. No surprises, but this kind of ringing endorsement of FTF and how it can help prevent instability is noteworthy. Thanks, Cindy

<http://thehill.com/blogs/congress-blog/energy-a-environment/166661-fighting-both-sides-of-the-war>

Fighting both sides of the war

By Raymond C. Offenheiser - 06/15/11 02:54 PM ET

Say what you want about U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack, the man does not flinch when it comes time to sell the USDA agenda. Whether that agenda, which he will push at a meeting of the G20 agriculture ministers this month, is one that will adequately tackle an emerging food crisis remains an open question.

"I would say that there are many reasons that there are food shortages globally, but none of them have anything to do with American farmers and ranchers," argued Secretary Vilsack at a recent hearing defending US biofuels incentives. If you are dumbstruck by this statement, it may be for good reason: it's just not true.

The reality of course is that we live in an interconnected world where US policies and the practices of the US agriculture industry help determine whether farmers from Kenya to Yemen eat or go hungry. And right now many of them go hungry.

Today the world produces enough food for everyone, yet one out of every seven of us lives in hunger. With the population set to balloon from 7 to 9 billion by the year 2050, we'll need to produce 70 percent more food and ensure that those who need it can afford it even as climate change cripples yields.

But currently, we are fighting both sides of the war on hunger. On the one hand, the U.S. has been a global leader, trying to attack the roots of food insecurity by boosting the livelihoods of small farmers in the developing world with programs such as President Obama's Feed the Future initiative. On the other you have U.S. policies that undermine the very initiatives we are investing in.

In a recent speech on food security in Rome, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton described the ambitious agenda of the U.S. to plan fight hunger, "Through Feed the Future, we aim to lift incomes of 18 million vulnerable men, women, and children ... prevent stunting and child mortality for 7 million children ... generate \$2.8 billion in agricultural GDP in the target regions that we have chosen ... and leverage 70 million more dollars in private investments that improve sustainable market opportunities for small-holder farmers."

These programs, if fully funded and properly implemented, will indeed address hunger at its core, offering farmers the tools and opportunity they need to feed their families. This will reduce dependence on U.S. aid over the long term and help prevent the kind of instability we saw break out in capitols around the globe as prices spiked.

But on the other side of town we've deepened our investments in policies that increase food insecurity. A string of policy disasters, from inaction on climate change to irresponsible biofuels subsidies, have driven food price spikes and punished the billions of people who live on less than two dollars a day.

Take the suite of ethanol incentives that Secretary Vilsack has defended vociferously. This \$6 billion dollars in taxpayer funded giveaways drive 40 percent of the US corn crop - 15 percent of global corn production - into gas tanks helping push food prices to record heights. The World Bank estimates that high food prices have sent 44 million people into poverty in recent months.

Even our programs to deal directly with the symptoms of food insecurity can be flawed. A perfect case study is U.S. food aid. Food aid is intended to provide emergency relief to communities facing major food crises, and can save lives, preventing millions of children from starvation and gross malnutrition.

But regulations on U.S. food aid, the result of high priced lobbying efforts by U.S. agribusiness and shipping companies, prevent the federal government from getting competitive pricing on shipping and food by mandating that food aid is grown, purchased and shipped from the US. These regulations undermine economic opportunity for poor farmers and ensure that up to 50 cents of every dollar spent on food aid is wasted, never even reaching those who need it. Moreover, shipping food from the U.S. slows down delivery by months leaving the hungry to starve as they wait.

If we're going to take these challenges seriously, we've got to stop fighting both sides of the war once and for all. The good news is that there's broad understanding about what must be done. And there are real life examples, which prove that hunger is a manmade problem with practical solutions. Recently countries like Brazil and Vietnam have cut hunger in half with a mix of programs that support small farmers and provide an effective social safety net to the poor.

Secretary Vilsack has shown real leadership in clearly articulating how investing in global food security is both "a moral issue" and one that is strongly in the U.S. national interest, stating "progress on these issues is good for America." But as we slip head first towards a second food crisis in 3 years, we can no longer afford to rest on good intentions alone.

Raymond C. Offenheiser is the president of Oxfam America