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ALLIANCE URGES CONGRESS TO ACT ON FOOD SECURITY BILL

June 26, 2009, Washington, D.C.—The Alliance for Global Food Security urges congressional action on the Global Food Security Act introduced, today, by Representative Betty McCollum (DFL-MN), joined by Representatives Donald M. Payne (D-NJ), Jo Ann Emerson (R-MO), and others, as it will build capacity in developing countries to increase agriculture production, expand agriculture-related enterprises, improve nutrition and provide sustainable livings for poor people.

Hard hit by the food and economic crises of the past two years, the number of hungry people worldwide has increased by 15%. Over one billion people are now suffering from hunger. According to Ellen Levinson, the Alliance's Executive Director, "Short-term emergency aid for the neediest has been, and continues to be, a life saver, and development-oriented food aid programs are very effective in helping poor populations improve their nutrition and food security. But, more is needed to turn this trend around -- and it is needed now."

In low-income, developing countries there is a concentration of poverty and hunger in rural areas, among many small agricultural producers, landless laborers and people affected by disease and disability. Farming techniques, access to good seeds and agricultural inputs, land quality and quantity, and financing available to individual farm families is insufficient, and technical assistance and extension services are nearly non-existent. Access to basic social, educational and health services is also very limited.

The Administration asked Congress to double funding for agriculture and rural development programs as part of its fiscal year 2010 budget submission. The Alliance supports the Administration's request, but Ms. Levinson noted, "In addition, legislation is needed to guide how those funds will be spent and that is what this food security bill would do. It tackles the world hunger problem head-on by focusing more resources on strengthening the entire agriculture value chain, from production to consumption, seeking measurable improvements in production levels, processing, marketing, rural infrastructure and nutrition. Most important, it modifies current law to assure that poor populations directly benefit from those efforts, for example, through programs conducted by non-governmental organizations that link rural villages to markets and services and help those communities establish viable agricultural and business enterprises."

Adventist Development & Relief Agency International ♦ ACDI/VOCA ♦ Africare ♦ Counterpart International ♦ Feed The Children
Food for the Hungry ♦ Joint Aid Management ♦ International Relief & Development ♦ Land O'Lakes ♦ OIC International
Planet Aid ♦ Project Concern International ♦ United Methodist Committee on Relief ♦ World Vision

A companion bill introduced by Senators Casey and Lugar has been approved by the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. However, the Senate bill does not include the more specific provisions on agriculture development that are found in the House version. The Alliance believes these additional House provisions are critical, as they give guidance about how the agriculture funds should be spent and what results are expected.

Other provisions of the House bill are similar to the Senate version. Both include a new program to engage U.S. universities and land grant colleges in agriculture-related research and education in developing countries, called "HECTARE." Both also establish a White House Coordinator for Food Security to organize participation of all relevant government agencies in developing and implementing a U.S. strategy for improving global food security, seeking to assure greater coordination and impact. In addition, the legislation authorizes a food crisis fund that can be used for procuring food aid in or near countries affected by food crises, as well as providing seeds, tools and other basic resources to help people recover more quickly.

The members of the Alliance are private voluntary organizations and cooperatives that are committed to addressing hunger, malnutrition and food insecurity through the effective and accountable use of funds, food aid and other resources. They operate in approximately 100 developing countries, implementing relief and development programs that directly engage, support and build the capacity of local communities, enterprises and institutions.

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