

March 8, 2012

Dear Member of Congress:

As proud Sisters on the Planet, we write to you to ask for your support to create a world where everyone has enough to eat, always. Despite abundant food, nearly one billion people struggle with where their next meal will come from. Soon there will be 9 billion of us. Women are the hardest hit, often eating less and eating last when food is scarce in the household. But they are also the key agents of change in their communities and best positioned to solve problems and forge a better future for their families. The good news is that you can do something to stand with women change makers in the US and around the world.

There are two important steps Congress can take right now to invest in women farmers, save lives and tackle poverty:

Fund programs such as Feed the Future that will increase productivity and resiliency of small-scale food producers.

Around the world, women are responsible for half of all food production, despite the fact they face systematic legal and social discrimination that hampers their productivity and limits their ability to reach their full potential. By one study, if women were provided with the same access to credit, tools and inputs as men, they could increase yields on their farms by 20 to 30 percent.

We need to keep innovative international agricultural development programs such as Feed the Future fully funded. These programs invest in women farmers who are already building sustainable solutions to hunger and poverty in their communities. They are also instrumental in helping farmers build resilience in the face of a changing climate that makes farming more risky. Keeping this life-supporting work fully funded is essential to reduce dependence on aid and address hunger now and in the future.

Reform Food aid in the Farm Bill

Helping hungry people during food crises is an essential part of US foreign policy; it saves lives, reduces instability around the world and protects the most vulnerable communities from catastrophe. But the current US food aid system is bogged down by regulations that cost lives and force the US government to waste up to one-third of every dollar spent on food aid.

We need to pass reforms in the Farm Bill that eliminate wasteful and ineffective food aid regulations that pad the pockets of special interests at the expense of the women farmers who are key to breaking the cycle of poverty. These reforms will cut waste, save lives now and ensure communities can feed themselves so they don't need our aid in the future.

Continuing crucial investments in agriculture development and cutting the red-tape that gets in the way of life-saving aid will offer substantial cost-savings for taxpayers over the long term and reduce dependence on aid in developing countries. Moreover, they will empower women food producers in their own efforts to tackle hunger and poverty.

Addressing hunger and poverty is essential to demonstrating our humanitarian values, protecting our national security and strengthening our economy. It also exemplifies what makes America great. Women are solving problems in their communities every day around the world. As a strong supporter of women's rights and justice, I ask that you take these steps to stand with women and join in the fight to end hunger.

Deepest regards,

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