

December 15, 2008

Dear President-elect Obama,

Congratulations on your victory in November. Among the many challenges that lie ahead, we would like to call your attention to the opportunity you have to address the ongoing world food crisis, through immediate and long-term solutions. The food crisis has ceded headlines to the financial crisis, but the economic downturn has only exacerbated the dire food insecurity in many households in the US and around the world.

According to the USDA's just-released figures from 2007, 36.2 million Americans are food insecure, including 12.4 million children. About one-fourth of these people suffer from "very low food security"—what the USDA previously called hunger. That total is 700,000 people greater than it was in 2006, and does not even take into account the food and economic crises of the last year. A preliminary study by researchers at Boston University found that food insecurity jumped 30% in the first six months of 2008, compared to the same period in 2007. Globally, one billion people face chronic hunger—a situation that is not only morally reprehensible, but can also lead to political unrest and instability. During your campaign, you pledged to end childhood hunger in the US by 2015. In an interview with *Time Magazine's* Joe Klein, you also recognized the deep flaws in our global food system that have made it vulnerable to the price spikes and collapses that we continue to face.

On October 16, in celebration of World Food Day, a group of organizations launched the attached "Call to Action" demanding real solutions at all levels to solve the world food crisis. Organizations representing hundreds of thousands of people have signed onto this Call to Action. We urge your administration to review and consider the proposals it contains as you seek to identify the root causes of the food crisis and develop lasting policy solutions, including those that would:

- ❖ **Stabilize and guarantee fair prices for farmers and consumers globally** through regulation of commodity markets and the establishment of publicly-owned food reserves;
- ❖ **Rebalance power in the food system** through antitrust enforcement and other measures to reduce the influence of agribusiness corporations on public policy;
- ❖ **Make agriculture environmentally sustainable** through farm policy and investment reform, including purchasing and procurement incentives;
- ❖ **Respect, protect and fulfill workers' rights** for farmworkers and other food system workers; and
- ❖ **Guarantee the right to food** and build healthy local and regional food systems that foster social, ecological and economic justice at home and abroad.

These basic tenets were recently given weight by the International Assessment of Agricultural Knowledge, Science, and Technology for Development (IAASTD). The IAASTD provides a thorough analysis of successes and failures of the world's food and agricultural systems, and a comprehensive set of policy, institutional and investment options for equitable and sustainable food systems. The report represents the best intergovernmental, multistakeholder expert assessment of how to address global hunger and price volatility. Yet the United States was one of

only three participating countries that did not formally approve the report at the final intergovernmental plenary in April, 2008. We encourage your administration to study the IAASTD report and ask you to join the international community in making concrete commitments to implement its options for achieving equitable and sustainable development.

We urge you to make a public commitment within your first hundred days of office to work towards the real solutions to the food crisis laid out in the Call to Action and in the IAASTD. We also urge you to select people who share such a commitment to be part of your food, agriculture, energy, trade and related foreign policy teams. We would like to request a meeting with you and/or your appropriate policy advisors to discuss how we could work together to bring true hope for change to our country and to the entire world.

During the campaign, you said, “We are one people, one nation, and the good of all must be a primary consideration in governmental policy.” A democratic and just food policy may be the most crucial element of such an approach to governance.

Signed,

Steering Committee, US Working Group on the Food Crisis

Agricultural Missions

Community Food Security Coalition

Food First/Institute for Food and Development Policy

Food & Water Watch

Grassroots International

Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy

International Partners for Sustainable Agriculture

Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns

National Family Farm Coalition

Pesticide Action Network North America

Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

Rainforest Action Network

World Hunger Year (WHY)

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