



September 23, 2016

Global Food Security Act of 2016 (P.L. 114-195)

President Obama signed the Global Food Security Act of 2016 (GFSA, P.L. 114-195) into law on July 20, 2016. The GFSA calls for a unified approach to U.S.-funded support for international food security. It also amends the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 (P.L. 87-195) to re-authorize and expand funding for International Disaster Assistance (IDA). It makes up to half of this funding available for the Emergency Food Security Program (EFSP), a program that began in 2010 and this law now formalizes.

Provisions of the GFSA will be implemented starting in late 2016. Given the number of congressional committees and extensive reporting requirements involved in implementing the law's provisions, this issue could continue to remain of interest to Congress.

Food security can be defined in many different ways. In essence, it means reliably having enough nutritious food available to all people when they need it.

For nearly 60 years, the United States has supported international food security mostly through programs that rely on the purchase of U.S. agricultural commodities. These programs include many restrictions on how the assistance is used.

The EFSP, in contrast, offers significant implementation flexibility. This formalization of the EFSP into law is considered a marked shift toward more flexible approaches to international food assistance. For more on U.S. food assistance policies, see CRS Report R41072, *U.S. International Food Aid Programs: Background and Issues*.

On a separate track, the Obama Administration launched Feed the Future (FtF) in 2010 as a presidential initiative to support global food security as part of commitments made at the 2009 G8 summit. FtF emphasizes a government-wide approach to address global food security through a range of approaches, including supporting developing countries in growing their own food, strengthening agricultural market access, and improving nutrition outcomes. This expanded the range of ways that the U.S. addressed global food security. The GFSA builds on this approach and authorizes a funding level similar to what FtF has received as a presidential initiative. It is therefore widely seen as an institutionalization of the Obama Administration's FtF initiative. For more on FtF, see CRS Report R44216, *The Obama Administration's Feed the Future Initiative*.

Key Components

The GFSA identifies a number of policy objectives to put food insecure countries on a path toward long-term self-sufficiency for reliable access to food and good nutrition. It

also supports flexible approaches to increase effectiveness of food assistance in emergency situations such as natural disasters and human-caused conflict.

Two key components of the act are (1) establishment of a comprehensive strategy to coordinate all U.S.-funded efforts to support global food security, and (2) codification of the EFSP into law.

Global Food Security Strategy

The GFSA requires the President to develop a Global Food Security Strategy ("the Strategy") to coordinate all U.S. efforts related to global food security, as well as agency-specific plans that identify anticipated contributions to implement the Strategy.

The law calls for the Strategy to emphasize agricultural development, nutrition, and resilience, as has taken place under the FtF. Prior to FtF, most U.S. international food security programs (such as Food for Peace and Food for Progress) primarily used the shipment of U.S. agricultural commodities as in-kind food aid to be distributed directly in-country or to be sold on the local market to generate funds for food or broader development objectives.

Emergency Food Security Program

The Obama administration began the EFSP in 2010 with the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) allocating IDA funds for this purpose under the authority of the Foreign Assistance Act. The EFSP uses a range of approaches such as cash, vouchers, or purchase of agricultural commodities in the location or region of a disaster in order to provide food assistance. This is widely considered a preferred approach when in-kind food aid cannot arrive quickly enough to respond to a disaster situation or when other approaches may not be appropriate or practical for local market conditions.

The GFSA formalizes the EFSP in law and makes up to half of IDA funds available to implement the program.

Oversight and Implementation

The GFSA recognizes six congressional committees as being involved in the act's oversight:

- Senate: Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry; Appropriations; and Foreign Relations.
- House: Agriculture, Appropriations, and Foreign Affairs.

This differs from most international food assistance programs authorized since 1949, which the agriculture committees have authorized as part of periodic omnibus farm bills.

In addition, the GFSA includes 11 executive departments and agencies as potential implementers, with the possibility for the President to include additional agencies.

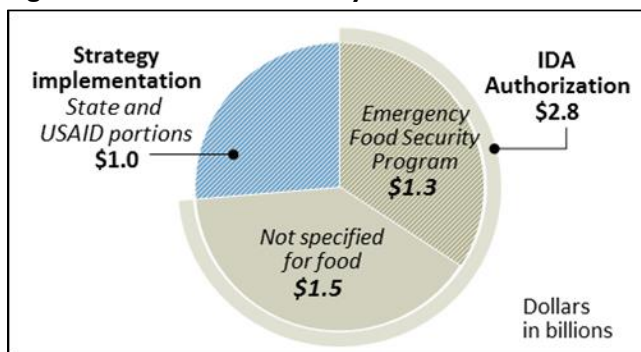
International food assistance programs that operated prior to the GFSA are implemented by two agencies: USAID and the U.S. Department of Agriculture. This shift toward broader coordination among federal agencies to support global food security efforts began with FtF and continues with this act.

Financial Authorizations

The GFSA authorizes nearly \$3.8 billion per year for FY2017 and FY2018, subject to annual appropriations allocated as follows (see Figure 1):

- \$1 billion for implementation of the Strategy. This is a similar level of funding as the outlays for FtF.
- Nearly \$2.8 billion for IDA funds to address humanitarian needs in international disasters. This is a sharp increase over the \$25 million that was previously authorized, but is similar to the IDA appropriation in FY2016. It is the first change in IDA funding level authorization since 1985 (most foreign aid program funding has not been re-authorized since then). Of this \$2.8 billion, up to \$1.3 billion may be used for the EFSP. The remaining IDA account funds are for flexible use (not necessarily for food security) to mitigate the impact of disasters. This authorization matches EFSP's annual spending in FY2014-16. However, it is a four-fold increase over the EFSP's first two years of operations (FY2010-11).

Figure 1. Global Food Security Act Authorizations



Source: CRS from P.L. 114-195.

Notes: Total authorization: approximately \$3.8 billion for each of FY2017 and FY2018, subject to annual appropriations.

Implementation Timeline

The act outlines a specific timeline for implementation, including an accelerated schedule for development of the Strategy, reports to Congress, and annual reviews:

- **October 1, 2016:** President submits to Congress the government-wide Global Food Security Strategy and agency-specific implementation plans.
- **Within 120 days of the presidential budget submission:** Director of the Office of Management and Budget submits a report that identifies budgets in the

next fiscal year (FY2018), expenditures of the past five fiscal years, and use of federal funds for multilateral commitments to global food security.

- **One and two years after the date of submission of the Strategy:** Implementation reports of the Strategy.
- **March 1 of each fiscal year:** Report of EFSP activities and anticipated outcomes.

Issues for Congress

As Congress continues to discuss U.S. support for global food security efforts, a number of issues related to implementation, funding and oversight might arise.

Some groups have applauded the GFSA for its emphasis on a coordinated approach for long-term food security in developing countries and flexibility for food assistance operations in international disasters. Others have expressed concern that these approaches may divert funding from programs that support U.S. farmers through commodity purchases. In addition, the Government Accountability Office notes that it is difficult to assess the impact of the EFSP. These concerns could be raised by constituent groups, such as agricultural and maritime interests.

Previous Congresses have proposed modifying food assistance programs to allow for broader implementation flexibility. The establishment of the EFSP in law sets a trend toward more flexible approaches to food assistance rather than reliance on use of in-kind aid. The GFSA calls for stronger coordination for a unified approach to global food security but also states that it does not “supersede or explicitly affect” existing food assistance programs (P.L. 114-195, Section 9). Discussions on revising existing food assistance legislation might resurface in order to consider how to relate existing food assistance programs, the newly authorized EFSP, and the unified approach that the GFSA calls for.

Funding for the GFSA depends on annual appropriations. Therefore, the act's priorities and approaches could arise during appropriations deliberations. The GFSA authorizes funding only for the portions of the Strategy to be implemented by the Department of State and USAID. Other agencies' contributions to the Strategy would come from within their own existing appropriations authority.

The GFSA requires the President to deliver the Strategy and agency-specific implementation plans to six congressional committees during the 114th Congress. The committees could consider these plans and discuss how to coordinate review of the Strategy according to their jurisdiction.

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