



Food Security



A farmer near Hyderabad in the state of Andhra Pradesh plowing with oxen. India has 116 million farmers and 60 percent of them farm less than one hectare of land. Photo: Dan Miller, USAID.

FAST FACTS

India has more people suffering from hunger – about 200 million – than any other country in the world.

On the 2008 Global Hunger Index, India ranks 66 out of 88 countries.

India has some of the highest rates of child malnutrition and mortality in the world.

India's rice yields are less than half those of China and have increased little over the last decade.

Agriculture now accounts for 84% of total water use in India.

THE GLOBAL FOOD CRISIS

After many years of stability, world food prices have increased 83 percent since 2005, prompting concerns of a food crisis in much of the world, especially in Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia, where the majority of the world's poor people are found. Food prices are expected to remain high through 2009 and then decline as supply and demand respond to high prices; however, for most food crops, they are likely to remain above 2004 levels through 2015.

Current high food prices are a short-term emergency for millions of people, especially the poor, but they also signal longer-term failures in the functioning of the world food system. Responding to the food crisis requires that the immediate food needs of poor people are addressed. It also requires correcting previous failures in agriculture policy by investing more resources into research and food production, establishing reliable systems for assisting vulnerable populations, and setting up a fair global trading system and an attractive investment climate for the private sector to become more engaged in agriculture production and food value-chains.

Addressing the challenges of global food security requires a renewed effort on developing agriculture in India. The country is one of the largest producers of food grains in the world, feeding 17 percent of the world's population on only three percent of the world's arable land. Improving agricultural productivity in India would help mitigate global food shortages and volatile pricing. Indian farmers, however, will have the difficult task of meeting the food needs of a growing population while coping with decreased area of arable land, increasingly scarce water supplies, and greater intensity and frequency of extreme weather events such as floods and drought caused by global climate change.

OVERVIEW OF USAID'S FOOD SECURITY PROGRAMS

USAID's response to the food crisis in India, integrate immediate, near-term, and longer-term activities in four key areas:

- 1) humanitarian assistance and social protection measures to help mitigate the risks of high food prices to poor people;
- 2) activities to boost agricultural productivity and improve soil and water resource management;
- 3) linking farmers to markets and promoting the efficient flow of goods and services through strengthened value chains; and
- 4) disaster preparedness and mitigation and early warning systems for floods and droughts.



Bhupal Reddy, a farmer in Andhra Pradesh with improved tomatoes. By following USAID modern crop production practices, he was able to increase his productivity by 30-40 percent. Photo: GMED Project.

FAST FACTS

India is the second largest producer of wheat in the world, growing 12% of the world's total wheat crop.

India ranks second in rice production, producing 22% of the world's rice.

India has 170 million hectares of cropland, the second largest arable area in the world after the United States.

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KEY ONGOING PROGRAMS

Humanitarian Assistance and Social Protection

Humanitarian and social protection measures help mitigate the risks of high food prices to the poor. The USAID PL 480 Title II program reaches out to vulnerable communities in India through nutrition and health, education, and agriculture activities. When the 50-year cycle of bamboo flowering led to a rat infestation in Mizoram, USAID provided aid to people whose food supplies had been depleted. When floods in the state of Bihar affected millions of people in 2007 and 2008, USAID provided assistance to people displaced by the flooding to help ensure food security.

Agricultural Productivity

Improving agricultural productivity is one of the most effective means to improve food security and reduce poverty. Since the Green Revolution in the 1960's, USAID has been working to develop Indian agriculture. Our efforts focus on the development and dissemination of productivity enhancing technologies and innovations, including biotechnology and supporting research on new high-yielding crop varieties, including wheat resistant to stem rust, and rice that is drought and salinity tolerant.

Markets and Value Chains

To be competitive in a globalized world, farmers' need access to markets and the entire marketing system needs to be more efficient. USAID activities are providing technical assistance to forge better linkages between farmers and markets, establishing grades and standards for food products, and strengthening value chains and market information systems. Improved markets, coupled with growing demand for agricultural products, will assist in creating improved economic opportunities in rural areas, which will help drive India's economic transformation.

Disaster Preparedness and Mitigation

India ranks among the top five countries in the world affected by natural disasters. Floods and droughts can greatly reduce agricultural production, affecting fragile food security ecosystems. USAID is working to build capacity in India for enhanced disaster preparedness and response. Indians have been trained in state of the art tools for better forecasting and early warning for extreme climate events and are collaborating with U.S. counterparts on drought monitoring and information systems.