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From: Mills, Cheryl D <MillsCD@state.gov>
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From: Shah, Rajiv (AID/A) [mailto:rshah@usaid.gov]
Sent: Friday, April 27, 2012 7:55 AM
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This is a Reuters piece on the council report:

U.S. risks losing gains in fight against hunger: report

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By Mark Weinraub

CHICAGO | Thu Apr 26, 2012 2:59pm EDT

(Reuters) - The U.S. government risks losing the gains it has made in fighting world hunger unless it maintains its effort of the last three years in improving global agricultural practices and food security, a private group said on Thursday.

The Chicago Council on Global Affairs' Global Agricultural Development Initiative evaluated the U.S. government and agencies for their leadership in global agricultural development. It also examined the impact the efforts from Washington had in Ethiopia, Ghana and Bangladesh.

"While the new administration and Congress have managed a three-year revival of U.S. agricultural development assistance in response to the galvanizing fears of a world food crisis that prevailed in 2008, it must now maintain the current momentum for the entire decade or longer needed to achieve a complete and durable result," the council's annual progress report said.

The report graded efforts by the State Department, the U.S. Agency for International Development and the Millennium Challenge Corporation as outstanding. The U.S. Agriculture Department and Congress received good rankings and the Peace Corps' efforts were rated satisfactory.

The Peace Corps has only 7 percent of its volunteers working on agricultural development, the report said, part of the reason the agency received a satisfactory grade.

"The United States continues to make strong progress in support of agricultural development and food security," the report said. "Strong leadership has ushered in organizational changes, strengthened staff and programs, and secured a steady flow of financial resources from Congress."

Increased funding was crucial to the progress, the report said. Congressional appropriations for annual food security rose to more than \$1.3 billion in the 2012 fiscal year from \$639 million in fiscal 2009.

Former agriculture secretary Dan Glickman and Catherine Bertini, former executive director of the United Nations World Food Program, are co-chairs of the Chicago Council's Global Agricultural Development Initiative, which produced the report.

The report noted that appropriations for agriculture have increased in all three countries it examined and said U.S. leadership has helped support those governments' capacity for fighting poverty and hunger.

It highlighted programs such as Ethiopia's Dairy Development Project, farmer loan programs in Ghana and farmer training sessions in Bangladesh as examples of ways to boost productivity in developing countries.

The U.S. government must stay focused on fighting world hunger even as the impact of the 2008 food crisis, which was triggered by soaring crop prices, begins to recede. Exploding population growth is placing an even bigger strain on the world's food supplies.

Wheat prices surged to an all-time high in 2008 and the price of rice tripled in three months, placing an enormous strain on the hungry in developing countries, where both commodities are dietary staples.

"Neglecting the task of agricultural development will only make the need for emergency food aid more frequent and the reemergence of recurring world food crises more likely," the report said.

(Editing by Dale Hudson)