



# **Feed the Future Partnering for Innovation Program Launch**

**Feed the Future**

**November 14, 2012**

**Tjada McKenna  
Deputy Coordinator for Development  
Feed the Future**

**Sponsor**

United States Agency for International Development

Feed the Future

Fintrac

Thank you very much, Claire, and I am so excited to be here. As Claire mentioned, this really is a signature initiative and project for us, and I know it was only awarded two months ago, but what you all didn't see was over a year ago, we recognized the need for this and started putting it together as a team and really wanted to structure it in an innovative way to be a true partnership facilitation effort, but to also be a symbol of our agility and our ability to work with different kinds of stakeholders and to bring them together to the floor. So it really is an honor to be here, and I want to thank Fintrac for embracing the project so well and getting this launched just two months after being awarded, but also our team internally at USAID with Margaret Innes and Laura Chismo and Stephen Fondrist and others who have been working on this for quite a long time. It really is the labor of their love on this has not been lost.

And the amount of attention paid to internally, I can't overstate that. So thank you very, very much. As Claire said, I'm Tjada McKenna. I'm the deputy coordinator of development for Feed the Future, and before I talk a little bit about what our aspirations for this are and what I hope today really kicks off, I think it's important to just step back a second and talk about some of the commitment that we've had on the public funding side to Feed the Future, and then that President Obama and other world leaders have put into this issue. Because I think that really sets the stage for why this initiative is so important and why this particular platform is a very critical one to us going forward. For those of you unfamiliar with the initiative, Feed the Future emerged after the 2008/2009 food price crisis where President Obama and other world leaders took a closer look at hunger and poverty and how food price crisis were playing into that.

At the time, they learned and recognized that there were about a billion people worldwide who were going to bed hungry each night, and the vast majority of those people, about 98 percent of them lived in the developing world. Today, I'm really excited to say that number of a billion is actually closer to 870 million, but that's still 870 million – too many people going to bed hungry every night. The thing that global leaders also saw was that food security has some serious implications. Prolonged under nourishment stunts growth, it slows cognitive development, and increases susceptibility to illness, and there is a recognition that by creating economic opportunities in developing countries, collaborative food security efforts could generate the economic growth and promote the global security that benefit us all and lay the groundwork for healthier, happier work world.

So at that point, when President Obama came into office in 2009, he launched Feed the Future at a G8 summit in L'Aquila, Italy. And the US at that time, we committed three and a half billion dollars to this effort, leveraging about 18 and a half billion from other global partners. When our work in Feed the Future, the US is focused on smallholder farmers, particularly women, and supporting partner countries and developing their ag sectors to spur broad based and inclusive economic growth that will help lift millions of people out of poverty. But the commitments at L'Aquila were about so much more than funding.

They really showed how we can marshal aid resources and that countries themselves that were partners in this effort can develop credible comprehensive plans. But in the course of executing against L'Aquila, one of the things we recognized from the very beginning and I think has really

been a hallmark of the way Feed the Future has operated is that we in the public sector cannot do this alone. In fact, we need to accelerate our progress and to make it sustainable and long-lasting. We need to mobilize private capital, take innovation to scale, and manage risk.

And to do that, you have to work with the private sector. A major focus of our work in Feed the Future as well as subsequent efforts by the G8, including the New Alliance for Food Security and Nutrition that we launched at the G8 summit in Camp David in 2008 is about creating enabling environments that encourage investments by smallholder farmers themselves, local African businesses, and multinational companies to ensure that developing countries benefit from a variety of investments as well as the innovation that the private sector brings.

We believe that by fostering partnerships and promoting innovation, we can help unlock the potential of small scale farmers and catalyze that broad based economic growth that I spoke of earlier, and trade to advance global food security. The importance of the private sector's role in the space cannot be over emphasized, and in fact, when we put together the Bureau for Food Security at USAID to help lead implementation, one of the first new offices we created is the office of markets, partnerships, and innovation. It actually had another name in a past life, but the goal of that office really was to reach out and to have partnerships with private sector, both companies as well as NGOs and other organizations that could really take our work to scale.

The private sector brings new technologies that have the potential to dramatically increase production and productivity through mechanization, better farming practices, or higher yielding seeds and saplings, or better market access. They can help communities understand and improve quality and standards so that exports are more competitive in the global marketplace, but that even in the local marketplace, farmers can be compensated for differentiated products.

It can help provide better inputs to farmers, such as seeds and chemicals that can help protect crops. It can expand and introduce agro processing businesses that add value to agriculture produce, provide markets for farmers, and create new jobs, and it contributes to a thriving economy where aid funding is no longer needed. Through Feed the Future, we've been engaging the private sector in a meaningful and comprehensive way beyond the traditional public private partnerships to meet the global food security challenge. We really view our private sector partners as thought leaders who bring crucial feedback, a fresh perspective, and innovative insights to the development table. Not just funding partners that can help supplement our funding, but real true partners and thought leaders in the space.

And our systematic engagement of and collaboration with the private sector promotes inclusive market growth and leverages the resources and expertise of both the private sector and civil society towards our common pursuit of food security. One of our main objectives in working with the private sector has really been to move beyond corporate social responsibility, which we still embrace as a critical source of funding and innovation, but to really look and try to align core business interest with development objectives, and I think this initiative is really one of those that will help us do that. And we've seen examples in history where doing that leads to large scale success. So just last month at the World Food Prize, we celebrated Dr. Daniel Hilel, an Israeli scientist whose micro-irrigation techniques were brought to the driest and least hospitable growing climates on earth.

Today, farmers using micro-irrigation produce high yield nutritious crops on more than six million hectares worldwide, a feat that may not have been possible but for the work of Dr. Hilel and his colleagues. And while these game changing technologies are often developed with the support of public resources and through public institutions, they're often more useful, more successful, and more sustainable if they're commercialized by private sector players. In Kenya, we saw a private seed companies, CMNSC's in East Africa, we worked with a – we developed a cost sharing partnership with them to distribute hybrid seeds in remote under served markets. Today, CMNS is distributing improved seeds to tens of thousands of small holder clients across the clients, resulting in an increased yield and a broader client base.

Across ten West African countries, two million hermetically sealed grain bags developed by Purdue University have been sold to farmers in 31,000 villages, resulting in savings of nearly 500 million in post harvest grain losses. And in Cambodia, US support to nearly 300 local private sector input suppliers has resulted in 25,000 farmers using new technologies, including seeders, thrashers, and fertilizer bricket making technologies. I'm looking forward to the next list of five to ten of these the Partnership for Innovation will support and help bring to fruition by working to increase agriculture productivity and competitiveness by expanding access to transformational technologies that can help improve the lives of millions of farmers.

This program will work with the private sector and public partners to identify promising technologies and commercialize them to smallholder farmers. We are incredibly excited about the potential for this program. Like we've seen it work in the past. We're excited to help take it to scale and to really be able to connect the organizations that come to us with a way to – innovative products with a way to get out there, and we're very excited to work with Fintrac and other partners that Fintrac will bring into the network to make these goals a reality. So thank you very much for giving us this opportunity, and we look forward to hearing all the successes going forward.

*[End of Audio]*