

# Ike's Food for Peace: The 'Paradox' of Hunger While Food Surplus Exists

by Marcia Merry Baker

Nov. 21—The world still remembers the important warning given by President Dwight Eisenhower in January 1961, as he left office, to beware the “military-industrial complex.” Just four months earlier, he spoke out equally strongly against allowing hunger to persist. In his last address to the United Nations General Assembly, in September 1960, he warned:

We must never forget that there are hundreds of millions of people, particularly in the less developed parts of the world, suffering from hunger and malnutrition, even though a number of countries, my own included, are producing food in surplus. *This paradox should not be allowed to continue.* [Emphasis added.]

In that speech, Eisenhower called for nations to take joint action against hunger, through the UN providing food assistance. He described how the United States was unilaterally providing food aid through its “Food for Peace” effort, established during his Administration in the 1954 “Agriculture Trade Development and Assistance Act.” But he stressed international collaboration:

The United States is already carrying out substantial programs to make its surpluses available to countries of greatest need. My country is also ready to join with other members of the United Nations in devising a workable scheme to provide food to member states through the United Nations system, relying on the advice and assistance of the Food and Agriculture Organization [created in 1945]. I hope this Assembly will seriously consider a specific program for carrying forward the promising Food for Peace Program.

Eisenhower's proposal was actively taken up by UN planners, and in 1961, during the first year of the presidency of John F. Kennedy, the World Food Program (WFP) was initiated.



*In 1954, the Food for Peace program under President Dwight Eisenhower, provided food aid from U.S. surpluses to less developed countries. Here, Eisenhower in 1942.*

The WFP was initially seen as needed only until the time when reconstruction after WWII was accomplished, and the newly independent nations in Africa and elsewhere had built up their own economies to the point they could be food secure based on their own production. The World Food Program was expected to eventually provide emergency food relief only for weather disasters, large-scale crop failures, disease outbreaks, and the like.

It was likewise presumed that food-surplus nations had a sovereign right to support their farmers through production “management” and parity pricing (establishing farmers’ price levels sufficient to cover their costs of production and future productivity). Food output capacity was maintained for the good of the public, but surpluses were not to be used against the interests of either farmers (through low prices), or aid-recipient nations (through dumping of food onto their markets). The 1954 American law authorizing Food for Peace specifically affirmed parity price supports for U.S. farmers and ranchers (by a “flexible” 82.5-90% of parity, as a floor price) and it affirmed the Commodity

Credit Corporation as the mechanism for food aid, for both domestic and foreign relief operations. These measures were seen as providing basic food security at home and worldwide.

### Revive Food for Peace!

However, these principles and practices were all phased out over the 1990s to the present time.

The paradigm favoring national food self-sufficiency and reliability was undermined by the introduction of the world casino economy as of the 1970s, starting with the 1971 introduction of floating currency values. Production of food was increasingly financialized as just another commodity. Money, speculation, and the consolidation of cartel control determined who would produce food, who would eat, and who would not.

By the 1980s, any progress toward food self-sufficiency that had been made in young nations was reversed as the IMF, World Bank, and related institutions suppressed economic development. By the 1990s, the deadly casino economics paradigm was institutionalized through “free” trade to the point of extreme food import dependence. The only gainers are the City of London/Wall Street globalist elites. World hunger has worsened, to the point that as of 2020 one in eight people—mostly in Africa—lack sufficient food. To rally opposition to this, the Schiller Institute in 1988 launched a “Food for Peace” initiative, with widespread participation of both farm and national leaders worldwide.

In 2019, nine million people died of starvation. WFP Executive Director David Beasley has repeatedly sounded the alarm this pandemic year, pointing out in October that seven million people had already died of starvation—many more than of COVID-19. This death toll will rise, he said, to 30 millions in the coming months unless emergency resources are mustered.

Beasley, a former governor of South Carolina who was nominated for his WFP position by President Trump in 2017, co-authored an article, “We’ve Averted Famine in the Past—We Must Do It Again,” published Nov. 17 in *The Times* of London. He and co-author



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Mark Lowcock, UN Coordinator for Humanitarian Affairs, stressed there that emergency response by the WFP requires full funding in the range of \$10 billion. The UN had just made available an emergency \$100 million for relief in Yemen and five other nations in dire need.

The United States has maintained its support of the WFP. America is its largest donor, accounting for half of the WFP annual funding. But what is urgent from all nations, is both immediate, full response, and collaboration to end the causes of hunger. This is the paradigm shift we need. As Beasley said when he first took office, “I would like the WFP to go out of business.”

In 1948, General Eisenhower had given a famous speech about food and peace. At a Crusade for Children event, he described his post-war experience in Europe, seeing “children searching for a garbage heap, in which they find all too little of any kind of sustenance that will keep them alive. Every man here who served with me in Europe has witnessed this with his own eyes.” He called for action:

How can we expect children who are reduced almost to an animal-like level of existence, struggling each day for any kind of scrap that will keep them alive, how can we expect them to develop the ideas and the ideals that in the future will bring them to be apostles of peace?