

Food aid move to USDA? Devex 26 Feb 2025

Food aid isn't usually just about helping the hungry.

From the start, the United States' flagship food aid program, Food for Peace, has served dual purposes: humanitarian relief and domestic economic interests. The \$2 billion annual initiative **buys surplus American commodities and donates them abroad**, sustaining a crucial market for U.S. farmers, and especially wheat growers. In fact, if U.S. food aid were considered an export market, it would rank among the top 10 destinations for American wheat.

Now, as the Trump administration dismantles USAID, [a new bill in the U.S. Congress aims to save Food for Peace](#) by **shifting it from USAID to the U.S. Department of Agriculture**, or USDA. The move, backed by Republican lawmakers and a coalition of farm industry groups, is being framed as a win-win: Keeping aid flowing to food-insecure countries while protecting American farmers.

But not everyone's convinced it will work. "USDA has only six agricultural attaché offices across 53 sub-Saharan African countries," one expert tells me. "They do not have the people on the ground to provide proper oversight for a program as large and important as Food for Peace."

There's also concern about USDA's lack of humanitarian expertise. While it manages international food trade and domestic farm policy, it doesn't handle large-scale emergency response — and certainly not at the scale of expertise that USAID had built up over decades. The U.S. State Department doesn't have that technical know-how either. But humanitarian aid advocates tell me that **transferring the program to USDA is still better than letting it die.**

Ultimately, Food for Peace is a test case: Can food aid survive in a reshuffled U.S. aid bureaucracy? Or is this the first step toward **making U.S. aid more about business than relief**? If the goal is efficiency, starving one agency to feed another may not be the best recipe.

Read: [As USAID is dismantled, Republicans fight to save a food aid program](#)

See also: [WFP to resume food aid delivery after halt due to US stop-work order](#)