

America First US Food Aid. By Elissa Miolene, *Devex*, 15 May 2026

The grain game

By [Elissa Miolene](#)

For decades, Food for Peace has brought American-grown commodities to nations around the world. Late last year, the U.S. Department of Agriculture took over the program from USAID — and in January, USDA [announced](#) it would be **granting \$452 million to the World Food Programme.**

That cash went toward distributing American-grown commodities in seven countries — and now, [USDA](#)'s second pot of cash [will do much of the same](#). The nations include the Democratic Republic of Congo, El Salvador, Ethiopia, Guatemala, Haiti, Kenya, and Rwanda, but **fail to include the two places where famine was officially confirmed last year: Gaza and Sudan.**

“By concentrating on many of the same countries where the World Food Programme was funded to operate just four months ago, the plan risks creating parallel systems in the same locations,” **Dina Esposito**, the last assistant administrator of [USAID](#)'s Bureau for Resilience, Environment, and Food Security, tells me. “Absent a clearer explanation of the rationale, the approach appears highly inefficient.”

Of course, USDA thinks about it differently. Through the latest set of awards, the agency is **pushing for an “America First approach to international food assistance,”** one that is expected to fund up to 14 projects with timelines of 18 to 24 months each.

The awards will range from \$20 million to \$200 million, and **require a 50% spending floor for American-grown commodities and ocean freight.** All of that, USDA says, will bring Food for Peace back to its “core function [of] supporting American Farmers feeding the world’s hungriest.”

Read: [USDA opens Food for Peace applications — with strings attached](#)