

**New PL480 Rules.** By Anna Gawel, *Devex Newswire*, 11 May 2026

## **'Means to an end'**

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Historically, Food for Peace has sent a certain amount of U.S.-grown commodities abroad to feed the hungry. The intended beneficiaries? Those hungry people. But the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the remnants of USAID have an agreement — an iteration of which Devex obtained — that would flip the script, with [American foreign food aid geared to benefit American farmers.](#)

“If you read the [original] Food for Peace Act, the primary goal was to address hunger, poverty, malnutrition. To address the needs of beneficiaries,” says a senior official who used to manage the program. “This flips that around and makes the primary beneficiary the U.S. farmer. **The person on the receiving end is a means to an end.**”

That’s not all. My colleague Elissa Miolene details how U.S. funding could come with another potentially steep price — picking winners and losers **based on how much countries serve U.S. ag interests.** It could also place conditions that countries in the grips of starvation can’t possibly meet.

Specifically, while Food for Peace — which was once led by [USAID](#) but has now been [transferred](#) to [USDA](#) — will still prioritize countries experiencing natural disasters and conflict, USDA will select nations for the program if they are “seeking to improve their political or economic stability through sound, evidence-based policy decisions,” according to the document obtained by Devex.

**That could bar many of the countries** deeply entrenched in famine from receiving food aid, says **Dina Esposito**, a former director of Food for Peace.

“Almost certainly, fewer of the world’s most acutely hungry people will be reached under these criteria,” she says. **“Famine-prone countries like Sudan may not qualify at all.”**

Another concern is **a push to establish new markets for U.S. agricultural producers** — something that will be assessed by a reduction in prohibitive nontariff trade barriers related to biotechnology and pesticides, along with an increase in commercial sales of U.S.

agricultural products to beneficiary countries.

“They’re going to try to use this program as a carrot,” the senior official says. “We’ll come in and do emergency programs if you lower a tariff, if you open your market.”

Questions are swirling around other changes, including **a sharp drop in Food for Peace staffing** — 300 at USAID versus 26 at USDA. But in a recent congressional hearing, USDA chief **Brooke Rollins** assured lawmakers that **USDA can pull off the transition.**

“Obviously, there’s always going to be a little bit of clunkiness as we’re moving things around,” she said. “But ultimately, the team feels confident, they’re happy to accept the program.”