

Asha Abdulbein, a single mother of five, received goats, tools and inputs for her small farm as part of the Benishangul Gumuz Food Security and Economic Growth Project, a CIDA-funded project in Ethiopia. This project supports more than 127,000 beneficiaries to diversify food choices, improve agricultural productivity and engage in sustainable income-generating activities. *Credit: Canadian Hunger Foundation*

# Fertile Ground?

## Assessing CIDA's investments in food and farming July 2013

Recent research by a coalition of Canadian international development organizations found that Canada's work on global food security is well funded and well targeted. It is improving food security for very poor people in developing countries, and should be continued.

The research also identified ways in which Canada's food security work could be improved. Increased transparency and consultation with beneficiaries, and a food security perspective across government departments, would increase Canada's effectiveness in addressing global food security.

A report by:





Photo Credit: Canadian Hunger Foundation



Photo Credit: Canadian Foodgrains Bank

## Introduction

In 2008, a global food crisis hit the news. Food prices skyrocketed, contributing to riots in over 40 countries. An additional 200 million people in Africa, Asia and Latin America were unable to meet their daily food needs and there was a serious decline in world food stocks. While the headlines have faded, the challenge of building a world free from hunger still remains: today 870 million people are still food insecure<sup>1</sup>, food prices remain near record levels, and the world still faces the challenge of feeding seven billion people.

Investments in agriculture and nutrition are an effective way to improve food security. They enable the poorest families, most of whom are food producers, to overcome poverty. By increasing resilience to shocks, they also help to sustain success.

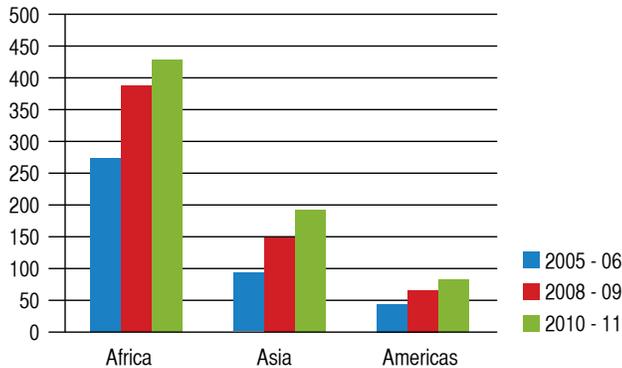
In a demonstration of global leadership, Canada committed in 2009 to double its investments in agriculture in developing countries and increase resources for food assistance and nutrition. This Food Security Strategy<sup>2</sup>, which is implemented by the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), was part of the G8's response to the global food crisis.

Three years on, the Food Security Policy Group, a coalition of Canadian international development organizations, conducted an independent assessment of the Strategy. We wanted to determine if Canadian efforts were accomplishing what they set out to do, and if there were ways they could be improved to meet the future challenges of global hunger. Our methodology is explained on the last page of this paper<sup>3</sup>.

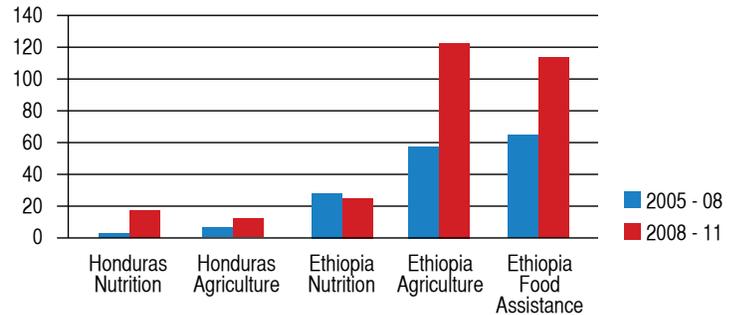
CIDA has 20 countries of focus, in which they invest 80% of Canada's country-to-country aid. Food security<sup>4</sup> is a thematic focus in nine of these countries<sup>5</sup>. For this assessment, we studied CIDA's work in one African country (Ethiopia) and one Latin American country (Honduras) in detail. We also reviewed statistics on Canada's spending on food security, and analyzed the impact on global food security of Canada's actions, statements, policies and programming on the world stage.



**Fig 1: CIDA's Food Security Spending by Region**  
(million Cdn \$/yr)



**Fig 2: CIDA's Food Security Spending in Ethiopia and Honduras**  
(million Cdn \$, cumulative over 3 years)



## What is Canada doing well?

### Food security spending has increased.

CIDA's spending on food security increased dramatically after the Food Security Strategy was announced in 2009. Comparing the three years of this Assessment (2008-11) with the three years preceding it, spending increased 75% in Ethiopia and 400% in Honduras. Spending increased in all regions of the world (Fig.1), and in all aspects of food security programming (agriculture, food assistance<sup>6</sup> and nutrition) (Fig.2).

Canada has fulfilled its promise of doubling investment in agriculture, and has been singled out among all aid donors for giving the highest percentage of its aid to food security from 2008 to 2010.<sup>7</sup> Canada also invests more than any other donor country in basic nutrition around the world,<sup>8</sup> and makes the largest per capita commitment to food assistance.<sup>9</sup>

### CIDA's food security work is well-targeted.

Our assessment compared CIDA's work in Ethiopia and Honduras with the priorities of smallholder farmers and governments in those countries. We found that CIDA's work aligns well with the needs identified by farmers and governments.

In particular, CIDA got high marks for its work with smallholders (who are often the most food insecure people), as well as its work with women (who make up most of the farmers but often don't have control over land, finances or other resources). CIDA is also succeeding at integrating nutrition into broader food security work, at helping farmers adapt to climate change, and at helping local governments to improve their agricultural policies.

Some of CIDA's most effective programming involves integration of more than one component of development: farming with marketing, research with extension to smallholders, agricultural production with policy and short-term food assistance with long-term development.

"Before this project, my family was dependent on food aid, as we couldn't grow enough through rain-fed farming to meet our own food needs, let alone save money. Now, with irrigation from this project, we are growing fruit trees, vegetables and cassava. We grow enough to eat, we don't need food aid, and we have saved enough to buy two oxen, three milk cows, two calves and three heifers".

—Mohammed Indris, a beneficiary of a CIDA-funded project in Ethiopia.

"The majority of [CIDA's] work concentrates in the region most vulnerable to climate change, which is also the second-poorest of the country"

—Honduras report

"Production and productivity in the agricultural sector increased substantially during this period due to the influence of new agricultural technologies and policies."

—Ethiopia report



Hamed Adam (above) of Kurmuk, Ethiopia has dramatically increased his groundnut production, through his participation in a CIDA-funded agricultural project. Photo Credit: Canadian Hunger Foundation



Photo Credit: Canadian Foodgrains Bank

“It would be a significant oversight for CIDA not to work more closely with civil society, especially when developing more nutritional crops and agricultural systems that are resilient to climate change”  
—Ethiopia report

Aid “addresses the roots of insecurity, that left unchecked can destabilize our borders and economies.”  
—Julian Fantino, Minister of International Cooperation<sup>10</sup>

## How could Canada improve? Maintain food security priority and funding

In order for the Food Security Strategy to sustain its early progress in the fight against hunger, food security must remain both a policy and programming priority for the Government of Canada. Genuine improvement at national levels in food security—whether in agriculture or nutrition—will only be seen with sustained investment over many years.

In 2012, Canada announced that it would cut its overall aid program by 8% over the next three years. This could make it difficult to sustain investment in food security.

The recent announcement that CIDA will merge with the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade raises questions about the role of food security in the new department. It is important that the focus and funding for food security is maintained in the face of overall budget cuts and the upcoming merger.

## Improve publicly available information on Canada’s work in food security.

There is little detail about Canada’s work on food security available to the public. There are no publicly available plans for how CIDA is implementing the Food Security Strategy and measuring its performance, and few details on what other government departments are doing with their portion of the food security money. This makes it difficult for civil society in Canada and in developing countries to understand, support and monitor what CIDA is doing, to seek improvements in policy or programming, or to share success stories with the public.



Photo Credit: Canadian Foodgrains Bank



Photo Credit: Canadian Hunger Foundation

**Asheh Abdulahi and Sandalia Mubarak (right) of Sherkole, Ethiopia lost all of their sheep and goats with the arrival of South Sudanese refugees whose livestock were carrying new strains of diseases. With agricultural training from a CIDA-supported project, they are now intercropping pumpkins and maize for food production. Photo credit: Canadian Hunger Foundation**

### **Consultation with smallholder farmers should be strengthened.**

Farmers, farm organizations and other civil society organizations in developing countries often have little opportunity to share their own concerns or give feedback on their own government's initiatives. Our research found smallholder farmers in Honduras and Ethiopia felt that neither their own governments nor CIDA made much effort to listen to their views on food security.

Canadian legislation requires that all aid spending include consultation with the intended beneficiaries. Regular consultation between CIDA and smallholder farmers, either directly or through CIDA's partners, could improve program design, delivery and ownership. It could also build the capacity of farmers' organizations to engage with their own governments, paving the way for stronger civil society participation and improved governance.

### **Ensure broader Canadian policy objectives are supportive of CIDA's food security objectives**

CIDA's work on food security is currently well funded and designed to address the right issues. However, there are concerns that actions of other Canadian government departments may undermine this good work. It is important that Canada analyzes the possible implications of its international actions on smallholder farmers, and that this analysis informs its positions in key fora dealing with issues of trade, energy, climate change and the environment.

For example, there are cases where Canada's promotion of agricultural exports may conflict with the objectives of the Food Security Strategy. Also, Canada's poor track record in international climate negotiations does little to address the concerns of farmers in many countries, who identify climate change as a serious risk now and into the future.



Sandra Gomez harvesting cucumbers from her family farm in Lauterique, Honduras. Credit: Oxfam Quebec



Zenon Vasquez proudly displays the harvest from his farm in Francisco Morazan, Honduras. Credit: Oxfam Quebec

## Methodology

This Assessment is made up of four components, which were summarized in a Synthesis Report. The full reports, including more detailed terms of reference, are available at [www.ccic.ca/working\\_groups/food\\_e.php](http://www.ccic.ca/working_groups/food_e.php).

The first two pieces were in-country studies of CIDA's food security work in Ethiopia and Honduras. For these studies, local researchers were contracted, with terms of reference that included:

- Reviewing CIDA programming on the ground to determine how well it aligns with national policies, priorities of smallholder farmers and the goals laid out in CIDA's Food Security Strategy.
- Drawing information from farmers, farm organizations, civil society organizations, government officials and other stakeholders.
- Preparing a draft report and using it as a basis for discussion during a country workshop with relevant stakeholders.

The third piece was *A Statistical Review of CIDA's Food Security Theme 2008-09 to 2010-11*. This research compared pre- and post-Strategy spending, and has data broken down by country, by region of the world, by sector, by government department, by multilateral organization, and by implementing agent.

The fourth piece was an analysis of the *Multilateral and International Dimensions of CIDA's Food Security Strategy*. It assessed alignment between the Food Security Strategy and CIDA's spending through multilateral

channels, CIDA's actions and statements at international fora, and actions of other government departments.

We sought and received input from CIDA officials at various stages in the research. They commented on the terms of reference and provided detailed feedback on draft reports. In May 2013, coalition members and CIDA staff met for a workshop to discuss key findings of the research.

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup>FAO, WFP and IFAD. 2012. *The State of Food Insecurity in the World 2012*. [www.fao.org/publications/sofi/en](http://www.fao.org/publications/sofi/en)

<sup>2</sup>[www.acdi-cida.gc.ca/prioritythemes](http://www.acdi-cida.gc.ca/prioritythemes)

<sup>3</sup>Unless otherwise noted, all statements and data in this summary are based on the full reports from *Fertile Ground? Assessing CIDA's investments in food and farming*, available at [www.ccic.ca/working\\_groups/food\\_e.php](http://www.ccic.ca/working_groups/food_e.php)

<sup>4</sup>"Food security" exists when all people have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs for an active and healthy life.

<sup>5</sup>CIDA's focus on food security includes five countries in Africa (Ethiopia, Ghana, Mali, Senegal and Sudan/South Sudan), plus Honduras, Ukraine, West Bank/Gaza and Vietnam.

<sup>6</sup>Food assistance includes food aid (direct provision of food), as well as vouchers or cash given to increase short-term consumption of food. "Food assistance" is coming to replace the term "food aid". For the years reported here, CIDA data sets refer to "emergency food aid" and "food aid for food security".

<sup>7</sup>Report from OECD-DAC in 2012 on *Aid for Food and Nutrition Security*, [www.oecd.org/dac/povertyreduction/foodsecurityandnutrition.htm](http://www.oecd.org/dac/povertyreduction/foodsecurityandnutrition.htm)

<sup>8</sup>Report from *Development Initiatives in 2013*, [www.devinit.org/reports/the-nutrition-aid-financing-landscape](http://www.devinit.org/reports/the-nutrition-aid-financing-landscape)

<sup>9</sup>See commitments at [foodassistanceconvention.org](http://foodassistanceconvention.org)

<sup>10</sup>Ottawa Citizen: Aid & Development blog, 14 May 2013.