



James L. Henry
Chairman

January 31, 2017

The Honorable Donald J. Trump
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

The United States has been a leader in alleviating hunger around the world for more than 60 years. Through a variety of programs under the Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), Americans have been helping to feed billions of hungry people around the world through our in-kind food donation programs, including Food for Peace (P.L. 480), Food for Progress, and Food for Education. USA Maritime is a coalition of ship owning companies, maritime labor organizations, and maritime trade associations. We are writing to you today to ask for your support for these programs, which are unique among foreign aid programs and therefore deserve special consideration.

The Eisenhower Administration signed into law the Food for Peace Program, landmark legislation designed with two core functions in mind. Americans would generously provide food to hungry people across the world as a diplomatic tool, creating good will and helping to prevent potential conflicts before they could start. In addition, the law required that the food be grown in the United States by American farmers, and shipped on American ships with American crews, thereby leveraging the quality and reliability of U.S.-grown commodities and sustaining the national defense sealift capacity provided by the U.S.-flag maritime industry. The United States Merchant Marine has been a proud partner with our colleagues in the agricultural community to keep this program going strong for more than six decades. We, therefore, concur with their views submitted to you by letter dated January 26, 2017.

Unlike other foreign aid programs, Food for Peace has always had broad, bipartisan support because it yields a domestic economic benefit by promoting American jobs while also serving to help others abroad. For decades the program has been working well as it was originally intended despite relentless attacks on the agricultural and maritime communities. The previous Administration seemed determined to “reform” the program by shifting it from an in-kind based program that provides a domestic benefit, and turning it instead into an overseas cash giveaway program with minimal oversight or accountability. Continuation of such policies would be disastrous for American jobs and American workers.

As a strong supporter of American jobs and putting America first, we urge you to ensure that USAID and USDA end their misguided attempts at turning P.L. 480 into a cash giveaway program that would kill American jobs and waste taxpayer money. We ask you to ensure that the use of American-grown in-kind commodity contributions remains fundamental to these programs and that the use of U.S.-Flag ships and American mariners will be prioritized by your Administration.

The U.S. maritime industry looks forward to working with you to implement your economic agenda promoting American jobs and American workers. As an industry that is fundamental to American economic, national, and homeland security, we are optimistic that you and your Administration will turn away from some of the misguided policies of the past that have prioritized foreign interests at the expense of American citizens and foreign products over American products.

The Food for Peace, Food for Progress, and Food for Education programs are critical to the continued success of the United States Merchant Marine, and they promote domestic agriculture while serving as a diplomatic tool to express the generosity of the American people. The programs have worked, and will continue to work, so long as the federal government does not try to “reform” them in such a way that undermines their original intent.

We thank you for your consideration of our views on this important issue.

Sincerely,



James L. Henry
Chairman