

U.S. Embassy Announces Groundbreaking Effort to Provide Emergency Food Assistance to Earthquake Victims in Haiti

Two New Grants Utilize Cash and Food Vouchers to Complement In-Kind Food Aid

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PORT-AU-PRINCE -The [U.S. Agency for International Development \(USAID\)](#) announced today that it will award two separate, high-impact grants in Haiti to help earthquake-affected families meet their food needs from local markets with cash or vouchers. The innovative grants, the first two made in Haiti under USAID's new [Emergency Food Security Program](#), were awarded to the [World Food Programme \(WFP\)](#) and [Mercy Corps](#).

The Emergency Food Security Program is a new initiative managed by USAID's Office of Food for Peace. It provides grants for local or regional procurement of food commodities or for the use of cash or vouchers for the purchase of food in response to an emergency. It complements the use of U.S. Title II in-kind food aid when food purchased in the United States cannot arrive fast enough to respond to the emergency; when local or regional procurement, cash transfers or food voucher programs may be more appropriate than in-kind food aid from the United States due to market conditions; or when significantly more beneficiaries can be served through the use of local procurement, regional procurement, cash or vouchers.

These grants will be executed in conjunction with longer-term efforts to improve Haiti's food security through [Feed the Future](#), the U.S. government's global hunger and food security initiative. Haiti is one of 20 focus countries where Feed the Future is working to accelerate inclusive agriculture sector growth through improved agricultural productivity; expanded markets and trade; and increased economic resilience in Haiti's vulnerable rural communities. In doing so, Feed the Future is addressing the root causes of hunger and building a lasting [foundation for Haiti](#) and other countries to better meet the needs and promote the security of their citizens. The United States is committed to aligning our investments with Haiti's priorities and building Haiti's capacity to engage in results-based planning and stakeholder consultation.

The grant to WFP, in the amount of \$35 million, will cover the cash portion of WFP's cash and food-for-work program. The program has employed nearly 50,000 food-insecure men and women to date and, with this grant, will grow to 140,000 by the end of this year. Workers are paid with a mix of food and cash for activities including debris clearing and irrigation canal repair and drainage. With an average family size of five, the income earned by each worker is predicted to help improve the food security of more than 700,000 Haitians.

The grant to Mercy Corps, in the amount of \$12.5 million, will provide food vouchers for 20,000 households totaling approximately 100,000 people in the Central Plateau and Lower Artibonite regions. Beneficiaries eligible to receive vouchers include those who have been displaced by the

earthquake, households that have taken in displaced people, or households with a vulnerable member such as an elderly person, nursing mother or person living with HIV/AIDS.

The Mercy Corps program has registered 135 vendors in local markets to participate in its voucher distribution program, which runs through the end of March 2011. The vouchers, distributed each month to selected households, are redeemable among registered vendors for food staples such as grains, cooking oil and beans. Working with local vendors encourages the quick recovery of small businesses in the food supply/market chain and helps to spur local production by increasing the purchasing power of beneficiaries.

Research has shown that the benefits from cash and voucher programs such as these will extend not just to those participating in the programs, but also to the local food vendors and farmers who supply the food. These investments will help stimulate the food supply/market chain and maximize benefits for local agriculture and neighborhood markets.

"These innovative programs allow USAID to address Haiti's short-term needs with an eye toward its long-term economic development," said Jon Brause, USAID's Deputy Assistant Administrator for the Bureau for Democracy, Conflict & Humanitarian Assistance. "The cash and food vouchers we provide to Haitians will increase their ability to access critically needed food. At the same time, the beneficiaries will use the cash to buy food sold in local markets, supporting Haiti's agricultural sector."

"As one of the four key areas in which USAID has focused its reconstruction efforts, agriculture is a critical component of Haiti's long-term recovery and a lynchpin of its economic development. We believe that these important grants are an innovative investment in both the immediate food security needs of the Haitian people and in their country's long-term success" said USAID's Haiti Task Team Coordinator, Paul Weisenfeld.

The American people, through the U.S. Agency for International Development, have provided economic and humanitarian assistance worldwide for nearly 50 years. For more information about USAID's programs, please visit: usaid.gov. To read IMPACT blog, see blog.usaid.gov.