

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

March 28, 2024

Thomas J. Vilsack
Secretary
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C., 20250

Dear Secretary Vilsack,

We write to thank you for your October 2023 announcement of a \$1 billion investment in the Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC) to help address global hunger.¹ We ask that you reconsider your determination that Ready-To-Use-Therapeutic Foods (RUTF) do not qualify as an eligible commodity for purchase and donation in the CCC international food assistance program. We request the program use all applicable CCC authorities to ensure nutritional needs are met for those suffering from the most severe forms of hunger.

According to the United Nations (UN) World Food Programme (WFP), the number of people facing acute food insecurity has increased from 135 million in 53 countries in 2020 to 309 million in 72 countries in 2024.² Additionally, nearly 150 million children suffer from malnutrition. This funding announcement signifies our commitment to addressing this crisis in an efficient manner, while also supporting American producers.³

We understand USDA is using authorities under Section 5(d) of the CCC Charter Act to “remove and dispose of or aid in the removal or disposition of surplus agricultural commodities (other than tobacco).”⁴ We encourage you to use authorities from Section 5(c), to “procure agricultural commodities (other than tobacco) for sale to other Government agencies, foreign governments, and domestic, foreign or international relief or rehabilitation agencies, and to meet domestic requirements.”⁵

Further, the use of Section 5(c) will allow both USDA and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) greater flexibility to expand the number of American farmers that can assist in addressing global hunger. Using the broadest authorities possible under the CCC will allow for purchases of a broader range of commodities, including RUTFs. Section 2 of the CCC Charter Act refers to agricultural commodities collectively as “agricultural commodities, *products thereof*, foods, feeds, and fibers”.⁶

RUTF are made from U.S. commodities sourced in 28 states and are the single most effective treatment for child malnutrition. RUTF brings children suffering from the most severe form of malnutrition – known as “wasting” – back from the brink of death in a matter of six weeks. With a recovery rate of up to 90%, it’s cost effective at about \$1 per day per child.⁷ Ingredients include peanuts, milk powder, soybean oil/soy protein, sugar, and a special vitamin mix. In 2022, the Biden Administration scaled its investment of RUTF to \$200 million, which was further bolstered by an additional \$270 million from philanthropic donors and other

¹ <https://www.usda.gov/media/press-releases/2023/10/24/usda-bolsters-investments-international-trade-and-food-aid>

² <https://www.wfp.org/stories/wfp-glance#:~:text=Up%20to%20309%20million%20people.and%20where%20data%20is%20available>

³ <https://www.usda.gov/media/press-releases/2023/10/24/usda-bolsters-investments-international-trade-and-food-aid>

⁴ https://www.fsa.usda.gov/Internet/FSA_File/charteractcurrent.pdf, page 6

⁵ https://www.fsa.usda.gov/Internet/FSA_File/charteractcurrent.pdf, page 6

⁶ https://www.fsa.usda.gov/Internet/FSA_File/charteractcurrent.pdf, page 1, emphasis added.

⁷ https://www.endmalnutrition.org/img/nourishthefuture_paper_v13.pdf

governments. This investment allowed nearly 7.3 million more children suffering from wasting to receive lifesaving treatment than the year before.⁸ USDA, leveraging CCC funds and working with USAID, is positioned to sustain this progress by including RUTFs in the CCC International Food Aid program.

We greatly appreciate your leadership and commitment to addressing global hunger and supporting American producers. We respectfully request that you use all available authorities to ensure this funding commitment is implemented in a way that most effectively addresses the global hunger and malnutrition crisis now.

Sincerely,



Martin Heinrich
United States Senator



Lindsey O. Graham
United States Senator



Rosa L. DeLauro
Member of Congress

⁸ <https://www.unicef.org/media/141771/file/UNICEF-Advocacy-snapshot-Malnutrition-June-2023.pdf>