



Notice of Request for Information (RFI)

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE [Docket No. USDA-2021-003]

Solicitation of Input from Stakeholders on the priority country selection under the McGovern-Dole International Food for Education Program

AGENCY: Foreign Agricultural Service, USDA.

ACTION: Request for Information.

DUE DATE: Written comments must be received by 5:00 pm EST on September 17, 2021 to be assured of consideration.

SUMMARY:

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS), Office of Global Programs, International Food Assistance Division requests comments from the public to inform its future programming under the McGovern-Dole International Food for Education and Child Nutrition Program (McGovern-Dole). This Request for Information (RFI) offers the opportunity for interested parties to provide input on how issues such as effective governance, government commitment of school feeding programs and graduation, which may affect the future annual selection of priority countries for potential McGovern-Dole projects. Responses should include as much detailed data, research, and suggestions as possible to facilitate and bring to scale transformative breakthroughs in good governance, government commitment, and program graduation. **This is not a notice of funding opportunity or a request for proposals.**

The link to the McGovern-Dole International Food For Education and Child Nutrition Program legislation is here:

<https://uscode.house.gov/view.xhtml?hl=false&edition=prelim&req=granuleid%3AUSC-prelim-title7-section1736o-1&num=0&saved=%7CKHRpdGxlOjcg2VjdGlvbjoxNmM2byBIZGI0aW9uOnByZWxpbSk%3D%7C%7C%7C0%7Cfalse%7Cprelim>

BACKGROUND:

The McGovern-Dole program was originally authorized by the Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002 and supports education, child development, and food security for some of the world's poorest children. It provides for donations of U.S. agricultural products, as well as financial and technical assistance, for school feeding and maternal and child nutrition projects in low-income, food-deficit countries that are committed to universal education.

The key objectives of the McGovern-Dole program are to reduce hunger and improve literacy and primary education, especially for girls. By providing school meals, teacher training, and related support, McGovern-Dole projects help boost school enrollment and academic performance. At the same time, nutrition programs are offered for pregnant and lactating women, infants, and pre-school children to sustain and improve their health and learning capacity before they enter school.

Each year, FAS goes through the process of selecting a set of priority countries to be included in that year's Notice of Funding Opportunity for new McGovern-Dole awards. At present, all potential McGovern-Dole priority countries are identified based on quantitative and qualitative information in alignment with the legislation, and including per capita income, child nutrition indicators, literacy rates, prior McGovern-Dole programming, political stability, and FAS Post coverage. FAS also considers Administration priorities, USDA priorities, U.S. Government-wide areas of focus, and any shift in a country or region's circumstances that creates expanded opportunities for creating or supporting a national school meals program.

QUESTIONS FOR STAKEHOLDERS:

The McGovern-Dole program seeks input from the public and any concerned stakeholders on the following questions to strengthen our country selection process for the program. The input provided, as well as input from other sources, will be reviewed and may be used to help inform the country priority selection process.

Please note that the U.S. Government will not pay for response preparation or for the use of any information contained in the response.

1. From your perspective, to what extent do McGovern-Dole's annual priority countries align with the program's legislation and goals? Are there discrepancies between what the program aims to achieve and where it works; if so, how would you describe them?
2. What facets of **governance** help or hinder the implementation of a school feeding program? For the purpose of this Request for Information, consider the World Bank's definition of **governance**: "Perceptions of the quality of public services, the quality of the civil service and the degree of its independence from political pressures, the quality of policy formulation and implementation, and the credibility of the government's commitment to such policies."

3. Regarding the concept of “graduation,” which for the purpose of this Request for Information means “transitioning school feeding and complementary activities from external to local support, to sustain the educational and nutritional benefits of school feeding”:

- a. What factors most influence the possibility of successfully graduating a holistic school feeding program?
- b. What elements need to be in place in a country to institutionalize school feeding best practices at the national and/or local levels? Which elements are the most important?
- c. When selecting a country and/or working in a country, what can USDA and implementers do to increase the chances that national and local commitments are fulfilled?

4. From your perspective, regarding the timeline to graduate a school feeding program from external donor support:

- a. All things considered, how long do you think it should take to graduate a national school feeding program? What about graduating a school, or set of schools in an area?
- b. What factors most influence this timing?
- c. Acknowledging that the time to graduation depends on many factors, under what circumstances do you believe McGovern-Dole should continue to work in a country for multiple funding cycles without a realistic “graduation” date in sight?

5. Which aspects of an exit strategy for a school feeding project, such as a McGovern-Dole project, are most successful in reducing program dependency?

6. Do you have any additional comments or recommendations on the annual priority country selection process?

7. Please identify in your submission the following:

- a) Are you responding as 1) an individual, or 2) an organization?
- b) Are you currently involved in implementing a McGovern-Dole project? (Yes/ No)
- c) *Optional*: Please provide the name of the responding individual/ organization if desired. Anonymous responses are also welcome.

SUBMISSION ADDRESS:

Respondents should submit their comments to IFAD email inbox at PPDED@usda.gov, using “McGovern-Dole Request for Information – August 2021” in the subject line.

ADMINISTRATIVE GUIDELINES:

Submissions should be limited to ten pages, using 12-point font and 1-inch margins. We welcome supplementary materials which can help support feedback in the submissions. Please do not include information of a confidential nature such as sensitive personal data or proprietary information. Responses to this notice are not offers and cannot be accepted by the Federal Government to form a binding contract or issue a grant. Information obtained as a result of this notice may be used by the Federal Government for program planning on a non-attribution basis. Please be aware that your comments may be posted online. A follow-up meeting may be held with those who respond to the RFI.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Lindsay Carter, McGovern-Dole Director, 202-720-1008, Lindsay.Carter@usda.gov. Done in Washington, DC, this 5th day of August.