

Highlights of [GAO-10-352](#), a report to congressional committees

### Why GAO Did This Study

Global hunger continues to worsen despite world leaders' 1996 pledge—reaffirmed in 2000 and 2009—to halve hunger by 2015. To reverse this trend, in 2009 major donor countries pledged \$22 billion in a 3-year commitment to agriculture and food security in developing countries, of which \$3.5 billion is the U.S. share. Through analysis of agency documents, interviews with agency officials and their development partners, and fieldwork in five recipient countries, GAO examined (1) the types and funding of food security programs and activities of relevant U.S. government agencies; and (2) progress in developing an integrated U.S. governmentwide strategy to address global food insecurity as well as potential vulnerabilities of that strategy.

### What GAO Recommends

To enhance U.S. efforts to address global food insecurity, GAO recommends that the Secretary of State (1) develop an operational definition of food security that is accepted by all U.S. agencies, establish a methodology for consistently reporting comprehensive data across agencies, and periodically inventory agencies' food security-related programs and funding; and (2) collaborate with other agency heads to finalize a governmentwide strategy that delineates measures to mitigate the risks associated with the host country-led approach. The Departments of State, the Treasury, Agriculture (USDA), and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) generally concurred with the recommendations.

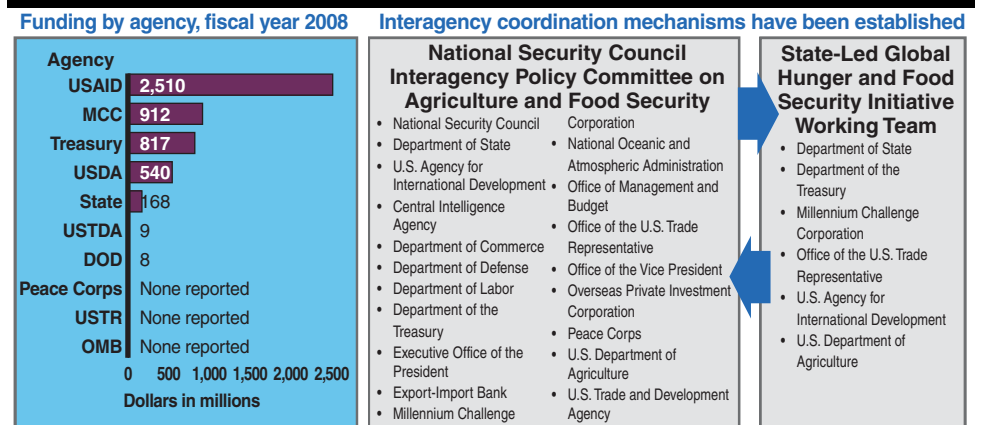
View [GAO-10-352](#) or key components. For more information, contact Thomas Melito at (202) 512-9601 or [melitot@gao.gov](mailto:melitot@gao.gov).

## GLOBAL FOOD SECURITY

### U.S. Agencies Progressing on Governmentwide Strategy, but Approach Faces Several Vulnerabilities

#### What GAO Found

The U.S. government supports a wide variety of programs and activities for global food security, but lacks readily available comprehensive data on funding. In response to GAO's data collection instrument to 10 agencies, 7 agencies reported funding for global food security in fiscal year 2008 (see figure below) based on the working definition GAO developed for this purpose with agency input. USAID and USDA reported the broadest array of programs and activities, while USAID, the Millennium Challenge Corporation, Treasury, USDA, and State reported providing the highest levels of funding for food security. The 7 agencies together directed at least \$5 billion in fiscal year 2008 to global food security, with food aid accounting for about half of that funding. However, the actual total level of funding is likely greater. GAO's estimate does not account for all U.S. government funds targeting global food insecurity because the agencies lack (1) a commonly accepted governmentwide operational definition of global food security programs and activities as well as reporting requirements to routinely capture data on all relevant funds; and (2) data management systems to track and report food security funding comprehensively and consistently.



Source: GAO analysis of the agencies' responses to the data collection instrument and program documents.

The administration is making progress toward finalizing a governmentwide global food security strategy—expected to be released shortly—but its efforts are vulnerable to data weaknesses and risks associated with the strategy's host country-led approach. The administration has established interagency coordination mechanisms at headquarters in Washington, D.C., (see figure above) and is finalizing an implementation document and a results framework. However, the lack of readily available comprehensive data on current programs and funding levels may deprive decision makers of information on available resources and a firm baseline against which to plan. Furthermore, the host country-led approach, although promising, is vulnerable to (1) the weak capacity of host governments, which can limit their ability to sustain donor-funded efforts; (2) a shortage of expertise in agriculture and food security at U.S. agencies that could constrain efforts to help strengthen host government capacity; and (3) policy differences between host governments and donors, including the United States, which may complicate efforts to align donor assistance with host government strategies.