

State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs
Committee on Appropriations
HT-2 The Capitol
(202) 225-2041

*Prepared by APLU for the Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs.
Re: USAID Feed the Future Innovation Labs
Respectfully submitted by Caron Gala, APLU Director of Agriculture and International
Development on June 11, 2021.*

The Association of Public and Land-grant Universities (APLU) requests at least \$70 million for the Feed the Future Innovation Labs in FY2022 to provide resources for the Labs to address new food supply and security needs given the pressures of the COVID-19 economic downturn. We also respectfully request that the appropriation be made in the legislation, which has been the practice in most recent years, rather than the committee report. The 23 Feed the Future Innovation Labs are led by 13 U.S. universities in partnership with over 40 other U.S. universities, including seven Minority Serving Institutions. The research leaders at these universities work with USAID missions and developing country research institutions on critical issues to advance global food security and contribute to U.S. economic and national security.

Over the past decade, the Feed the Future Innovation Labs have registered notable successes in addressing issues that disrupt the food supply, including post-harvest losses, food safety and access, and pest management. For example, researchers at the USAID Innovation Labs developed:

- 19 new sorghum lines resistant to the greenbug aphid in 2018. The lines were developed using germplasm collected by the sorghum research program from many parts of the world. Today, many American sorghum producers plant improved varieties developed by USAID-supported research.
- 13 common bean varieties and 2 blackeye pea varieties were developed by Feed the Future Innovation Lab researchers, registered as intellectual property, and have been made available to growers. Now, these varieties are commercially grown in the U.S. (beans in Michigan, Minnesota, Nebraska, North Dakota, and cowpea in California).
- Low-priced grain storage bags that contain an ultrasonic device capable of monitoring insect activity. The hermetic plastic bags are designed to kill insects that cause post-harvest losses. The bags are produced by seven companies, sold annually to three million farmers in 58 countries, and used to store many crops including beans, corn, sorghum, rice, and coffee.

The pandemic's disruption of food and agriculture systems is reducing hard-won gains of reduced poverty and food security. The Innovation Labs are helping to reverse and buffer against these setbacks. The economic downturn from COVID-19 is projected to increase the number of food-insecure people by 22 percent to 844.5 million people. USAID and Feed the Future Innovation Lab personnel have worked with governments and development partners to promote a safe and functioning food system throughout the pandemic. The Labs have mobilized their

extensive networks at multiple levels and across countries to mitigate pandemic impacts, manage stress in food and health systems, and reduce risk of rapid spread of COVID19.

International competitors continue to seek to displace the United States as the agricultural innovation leader by fostering greater ties with developing nations and in emerging markets. As a result, there has never been a more important time to maintain an international presence and demonstrate U.S. institutional excellence to reinforce alliances that contribute to national security and international well-being. Graduate student training is one way that the Innovation Labs contribute to food security and resilience via development and soft diplomacy. In 2019 alone, they supported 529 students, primarily at the graduate level from 39 nations. These students are future leaders in their respective countries.

The requested increase in funding would create opportunities to avert current and emerging threats related to pests and disease through new partnerships, to combat the food insecurity impacts COVID19, address climate change challenges, and build capacity and resilience against new threats.

About APLU

APLU is a research, policy, and advocacy organization dedicated to strengthening and advancing the work of public universities in the U.S., Canada, and Mexico. With a membership of 244 public research universities, land-grant institutions, state university systems, and affiliated organizations, APLU's agenda is built on the three pillars of increasing degree completion and academic success, advancing scientific research, and expanding engagement. Annually, member campuses enroll 5.0 million undergraduates and 1.3 million graduate students, award 1.3 million degrees, employ 1.3 million faculty and staff, and conduct \$49.2 billion in university-based research.