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**ASSOCIATION FOR INTERNATIONAL AGRICULTURE
AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT**

March 24, 2003

Subcommittee on Foreign Operations, Export Financing and Related
Programs

U.S. House of Representatives
HB 28 – Capitol
Washington, DC 20515
Attn: Lori Maes

Dear Ms. Maes,

By virtue of my position as President of the Association for International Agriculture and Rural Development (AIARD) in 2002-2003, I respectfully submit this testimony for the upcoming hearings of the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Foreign Operations, Export Financing and Related Programs.

AIARD is an association of professionals who dedicate their careers to alleviating world hunger and poverty through international agriculture and rural development. Association members work in public and private institutions throughout the United States, as well as in overseas locations.

Our Association believes that, for the world's developing nations, agricultural and rural development activities are the keys to political and environmental stability, economic growth, and alleviating hunger and poverty. As reflected in our testimony, our members are urgently concerned about the level of resources available through U.S. technical cooperation and development assistance to fight world hunger and poverty.

Thank you for your work in facilitating this hearing. If you have any questions pertaining to this testimony please feel free to contact me at (614) 292-7252.

Sincerely,

/s/

David O. Hansen
President

Testimony of

Dr. David O. Hansen

**President, Association for International Agriculture and
Rural Development**

Submitted to

**The House Committee on Foreign Operations
Appropriations Subcommittee**

March 24, 2003

The Association for International Agriculture and Rural Development (AIARD) greatly appreciates this opportunity to submit testimony to the Appropriations Subcommittee of the House Committee on Foreign Operations. I am submitting this testimony by virtue of my position as President of the Association in 2002-2003. I also serve as Associate Dean of Agriculture and Director of International Programs in Agriculture at The Ohio State University. AIARD is an association of professionals who dedicate their careers to alleviating world hunger and poverty through international agriculture and rural development. Association members work in the full range of private and public institutions throughout the United States, as well as in overseas locations.

The Association is urgently concerned today about the inadequate resources through U.S. technical cooperation and development assistance to fight world hunger and reduce poverty. The U.S. government currently allocates only one sixth of what was allocated to this noble cause 15 years ago. Other bilateral and multilateral donors have not only failed to fill the gap, but reduced their own support for world hunger and poverty reduction programs.

We earnestly hope that the Committee will take account of four facts as it considers the Foreign Operations budget for 2004:

- 1) ***Rural development is key to poverty and hunger alleviation.*** For the world's developing nations, agricultural and rural development activities are the keys to political and environmental stability, economic growth, and alleviating hunger and poverty. Conversely, the lack of viable livelihood options in rural areas fosters poverty, hunger, disease, instability, environmental degradation, conflict and terrorism, all of which are major social, political and ethical problems. The U.S. response to famine around the world is essential, but famine will reoccur without sustainable agriculture and rural development. Without sustainable agriculture and rural development, other improvements in the quality of life, including better health and education, will simply be beyond reach.

- 2) ***World poverty, hunger, and HIV/AIDS are enormous challenges.*** While significant strides have been made to reduce hunger and poverty in many regions of the world, over 800 million people still suffer from chronic malnutrition. These people have been weakened and sickened further by a relatively new horror, HIV/AIDS, which is devastating the agricultural sectors of many developing nations.
- 3) ***Firm U.S. government commitment is needed.*** We must establish an unshakeable, long-term U.S. government-wide program to reduce hunger and poverty through increased support for international agricultural and rural development. Despite support within Congress and the current administration for this issue, agriculture and rural development programs are being overtaken by other priorities in the 150 account. AIARD will support the proposed Millennium Challenge Account as long as agricultural and rural development programs are key cornerstones of this major development initiative. Our association hopes that sufficient resources will be allocated to the MCA in order to allow it to have significant impact. Our members believe that agriculture and rural development programs will be a prominent part of the program if MCA programs are demand-driven as planned. We oppose reductions in the current modest program funding levels for agriculture at USAID as the new initiative develops.
- 4) ***United States grassroots support is widespread.*** Broad and deep support from the heartland stems from a realization that agriculture and rural development investments are the right, humanitarian thing to do. Widespread support also stems from experiences which have repeatedly shown that investments in overseas agriculture and rural development return impressive benefits to the United States. Investments in international agriculture contribute significantly to economic growth and political stability, enabling international commerce to flourish. The benefits of increased ability to export a broad range of U.S. goods in such an

improved environment are well known.

On February 13, 2003, AIARD, ACDI/VOCA, Bread for the World, the Congressional Hunger Center, Future Harvest, the International Fund for Agricultural Development, and the National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges sponsored a Capitol Hill Forum entitled “A Win-Win Agenda: Shaping New Opportunities in International Agriculture.” The event filled the Cannon House Caucus Room with over 250 people. Speakers included Ohio Congresswoman Marcy Kaptur, USAID Administrator Andrew Natsios, as well as representatives from USDA, Rotary International, and the North American Grain Export Association. They spoke with passion, experience and commitment. They recognized that investments in international agriculture and rural development (1) make a critical contribution to reduce world hunger and poverty, and (2) deliver important economic payoffs back home for the United States.

These outcomes are further illustrated by an AIARD publication which includes 45 case studies (<http://aiard.org/communications/food.htm>). I recommend it to your attention. Somehow, the passion, vigor and support from the heartland to alleviate hunger and poverty in developing countries must be translated into increased support for agricultural development programs at USAID and other agencies of the U.S. government.

USAID is currently in the process of formulating a new strategic plan for agriculture and rural development, and AIARD has been asked to provide input to this process. The plan will feature a limited number of quantifiable objectives. It will also describe several core, supporting strategies which will represent priority undertakings in support of the plan. These new efforts deserve adequate funding.

This is a time of great potential and extraordinary need for international agriculture and rural development. Our Association applauds recent statements of increased commitment to international agriculture and rural development in both the foreign and domestic policy agendas of the United

States. This stronger support by the U.S. government is evident in USAID, in Presidential initiatives on hunger alleviation, in key elements of the Millennium Challenge Account proposals, and in important components of USDA's commitments to advancing international food security. The current Administration is committed to the first of eight Millennium Development Goals agreed on by the United States and 188 United Nations Member States namely, to cut hunger and poverty in half by 2015. We cannot recall when such a strong commitment has been made in the recent past. But that rhetoric must be translated into adequate, long-term funding and action. That is now the challenge.

Thank you for your consideration of my testimony.