



Innovations in Agriculture and Food Security

Providing food assistance while supporting local production

Background

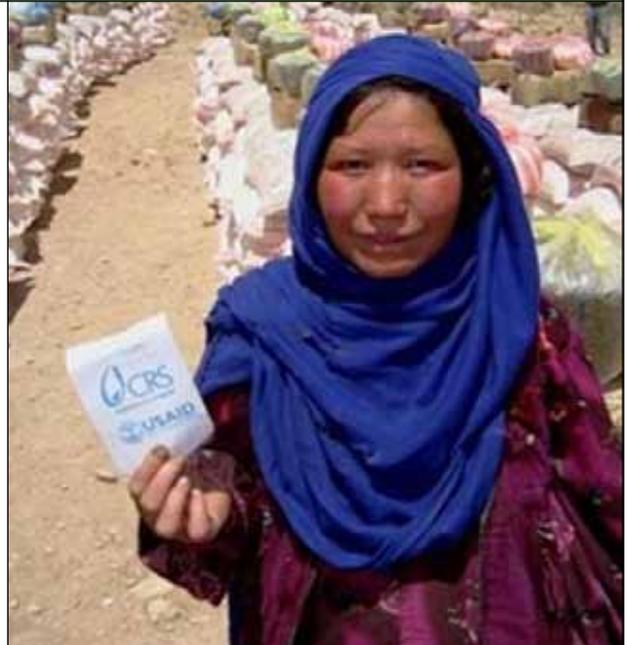
Local and Regional Procurement (LRP) of food aid involves using cash resources to purchase food commodities within the country or region of programming. The US Government is becoming increasingly supportive of LRP as a tool to respond to emergency needs and improve food security in developing countries.

Although the appropriateness of LRP depends on the specific context, in general LRP is appreciated for the following traits:

- speed, cost effectiveness, and cultural appropriateness
- potential for providing economic opportunities to smallholder farmers
- limited market impacts

Our approach

Since 2010, Catholic Relief Services (CRS) has implemented LRP projects valued at over \$12 million in Afghanistan, Benin, Burkina Faso, Guatemala, Mali and Niger. While most were carried out during emergency responses, two recent initiatives were classified as development programs. Implemented in Mali and Burkina Faso, they not only supplied needed commodities to



Food beneficiary in Qale Ghulemak village of Lal District in Afghanistan displays her CRS voucher. Ali Reza/CRS

Country	Grant	Commodities
Afghanistan	\$980,307	rice, wheat flour, oil
Benin	\$2,376,972	corn, rice, beans, oil
Burkina Faso	\$965,965	millet, cowpeas, vegetable oil
Guatemala	\$1,751,205	corn, black beans, fortified flour
Mali	\$100,033	millet, rice, cowpeas
Niger	\$4,400,000	maize, millet, rice, sorghum, cowpeas, oil
Niger	\$4,465,632	millet, sorghum, corn, beans, oil

school feeding programs, but they also used USDA cash resources to support local smallholder farmers. In order to make LRP interventions as appropriate as possible to the given context, CRS employed several different implementation methodologies, including direct distribution, food for work, and voucher programming.

Strategic partnerships

In order to support quality LRP programming, as well as to share lessons learned and facilitate data collection and analysis, CRS founded the LRP Learning Alliance with other implementing organizations (Mercy Corps, Land O'Lakes, and World Vision). Alliance members carried out joint activities, including online and regional trainings, market data database development, data analysis, and reporting.

The crux of the alliance was its relationship with Cornell University. CRS and the Learning Alliance partnered with Cornell in order to pilot tools for monitoring and



Abdoulmoumouni Chaibou's farm sits along the main road from Ouallam to Niamey in Niger. He learned a new technique that allowed him to create demi lunes on communal lands as part of a Voucher for Work (VFW) initiative in CRS' VOICE program. Emily Wei for CRS

collecting market price data. This data enabled uniform data processing and analysis, ensuring high quality results reporting, review and analysis. The benefits of working with Cornell included:

- Involvement of a university partner in developing tools for data collection and analysis
- Increased evidence base
- Better data to analyze impacts of LRP programming
- Improved empirical basis for LRP advocacy efforts

Findings

Cornell University analyzed data from Learning Alliance programs in ten countries, with data collected before, during and after local procurement. Results showed statistically significant gains in timeliness, cost savings from the local procurement of cereals and some pulses, an overwhelming preference among beneficiaries for locally procured commodities, as well as some behavioral and profitability impacts on participating smallholder farmers. Cornell's initial analysis also showed no negative, lasting effect on local market prices.

Looking ahead

In addition to using Cornell University's findings to advocate for increased funding of LRP activities, the Learning Alliance is drawing attention to LRP by sharing success stories and lessons learned with the wider humanitarian and development communities. The alliance will continue to explore learning and knowledge sharing opportunities that focus on issues of commodity safety, field based data collection, and linkages between LRP and longer term development programs.