

Millions Fed: Proven Success in Agricultural Development **Selection criteria, types of successes, and lessons learned**

Criteria for selecting success stories

After first determining that an initiative directly involved agriculture in at least one developing country, 20 case studies were selected out of nearly 300 nominations based on the following criteria:

- **Importance**—the intervention should have tackled an important food-security problem by addressing the needs of a vulnerable group;
- **Scale**— the intervention should have operated at scale, measured in terms of whether the number of beneficiaries exceeded several hundred thousand individuals or whether the intervention was, at a minimum, national in coverage;
- **Time and Duration**—the intervention should have been (1) fully operational at scale long enough to generate significant reductions in hunger or improvements in food security and (2) implemented in the past 50 years;
- **Proven Impact**—the intervention should have been supported by documented and rigorous evidence of a clear and measurable impact on individual or household hunger or nutritional status; and
- **Sustainability**—the intervention should have been sustainable, whether in financial terms (cost-effectiveness) or in broader social, political, or environmental terms.

Successes were identified in six areas:

- intensifying staple food production
- integrating people and the environment
- expanding the role of markets
- diversifying beyond the production of major cereals
- reforming economy-wide policies
- improving food quality and human nutrition

Major lessons learned

The following are often critical to success:

- Sustained investment in agricultural research and development to bring science and technology to bear on challenges in agriculture
- Sustained investment in complementary areas, such as irrigation, rural roads, education, and market infrastructure
- Creation of strong private incentives to encourage farmers, entrepreneurs, and companies to invest in agriculture
- Cooperation and collaboration among diverse groups, such as public research institutes, government agencies, community-based organizations, international organizations, and private companies
- Good timing, whether by chance or design, and good planning
- Creation of space for experimentation and innovation to encourage adaptation to local challenges
- Support for community involvement, including the use of local knowledge and practices
- Leadership capable of championing a movement for change, demonstrating what can be done, or marshaling political or financial resources.