

Wheat Scoop:

In remarks to the American Enterprise Institute (AEI) on Oct. 19, 2017, Sen. Bob Corker (R-TN) stated that he has talked to farmers and that farmers "do not care" about U.S. in-kind food aid.

"I don't know what farmers Senator Corker is talking to because I can assure you wheat farmers care a lot about in-kind food aid," said Dighton, Kan., wheat farmer Ron Suppes. "In 2016, U.S. government donations of milling wheat, that helped feed food insecure populations or were monetized by NGOs to fund local food security projects, reached a level that would be equal to a top ten export market."

"Sen. Corker's call to eliminate in-kind food aid donations in favor of all cash gifts is an extreme position, shared by AEI, a group that regularly attacks farm programs and farmers," said Gordon Stoner, a wheat farmer from Outlook, Mont. "In-kind food aid and monetization are still important tools for delivering greater food availability and easing local market price volatility."

In June 2017 at a House Committee on Agriculture hearing, Suppes testified on food aid and a trip to Tanzania where he saw development programs that utilized wheat.

"I saw first-hand how food aid can also generate goodwill with other countries," he said. "By encouraging agricultural development in countries like Tanzania, we're ultimately spurring economic growth, which means Tanzania is more likely to be a stronger trading partner in the future. And the tangible presence of U.S. wheat in that equation is a symbol that cash can't match."

In fact, one of the goals of the U.S. PL-480 food program is to get food to the places where it is needed most. Over time, this program has also had beneficial effects for U.S. farmers. The Philippines and Taiwan are countries that once received in-kind food aid from the United States. Today, both markets are major importers of U.S. wheat and other food ingredient commodities.

"U.S. Wheat Associates and NAWG believe time-honored U.S. food aid programs have been engines of peace, food security and local capacity building in countless countries around the world," said Stoner. "In-kind food donation and monetization should remain a vital part of America's tradition of global generosity."