

from Adami Tulu. "Their main worry is food aid, not feeding themselves. That's what's become of us."

Chombe headed to the Addis Hilton for a drink at his favorite watering hole. The lobby was packed with famine relief workers from humanitarian agencies around the world.

Takele Gebre, slumped in a chair near the lobby bar, laughed ruefully at the scene. He was the head of Sasakawa's Ethiopian operations, and he was consumed with a feeling of betrayal. "Now they come to help us," Takele said derisively, sweeping his arm in the direction of the scrums of foreigners crowding the check-in counter. "They send us their so-called experts and their grain when we are starving, but when it comes to helping agriculture develop into a business, where were they? What we had been trying to do was to help farmers produce more. But there was no help with the other things—credit systems, input systems, markets—and that led to the collapse. Where were these people then? We should have advanced simultaneously on all of this." He shook his head, contemplating the missed opportunities. "Increasing production is the easiest part," he added. "But to keep agriculture moving, to inspire the farmers, you need to do all these other things as well. We have to make agriculture market oriented. If we don't, we'll keep having these terrible shocks."

He stared into his cup of coffee, stirring idly. "It's not in the interest of others to help us become self-sufficient," he finally said. "They would rather send us food aid. You don't believe me? Go to the town of Nazareth. It's close by, just east of here. You'll see what I mean."

"Yes," echoed Chombe. "Go to Nazareth. You won't believe your eyes."

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Enough: Why the World's Poorest Starve in an Age of
Plenty. PublicAffairs, New York, 2009.

CHAPTER 6

Who's Aiding Whom?

NAZARETH, ETHIOPIA, 2003

The main road to Nazareth is paved with good intentions. It begins at the port of Djibouti on the Gulf of Aden and runs west through the Afar Desert, past the ancient sands where the bones of our hominid ancestor "Lucy" were found, and finally along the Awash River basin up to the Rift Valley highlands and on to Addis Ababa. In times of great hunger, this is the road that brings relief to Ethiopia. Over the years, millions of tons of grain grown by American farmers, and the good intentions that travel with them—to feed starving Ethiopians while helping U.S. agriculture—have made this journey.

There is a second, less-traveled, road to Nazareth. This one shoots up from the south, from the Arsi and Bale regions where Chombe Seyoum's family has long farmed. In good years, when the rains generously sprinkle the highlands, caravans of trucks make the trek north laden with the bounty of Ethiopia's wheat and corn farmers.

The two roads meet in the center of Nazareth, in a cacophonous cluster of unbridled commerce: market stalls, bus stops, outdoor restaurants, transit hotels, and chicken and goat auctions. During 2003, as trucks piled high with food came speeding into that intersection from both directions, there was a spectacular collision: The mythology of American food aid ran

smack into the reality of African agriculture, where hunger and plenty, shortage and surplus, sometimes exist side by side in the same country in the same year.

Jerman Amente, a thirty-nine-year-old Ethiopian farmer and grain trader, had a roadside view of the collision. Standing in the dirt parking lot outside his grain warehouse, he could feel the trucks rumbling in from Djibouti, massive double-load wagons stacked to the top with 220-pound white woven-plastic bags bearing the characteristic red, white, and blue markings of American food intended for starving foreigners. The trucks came in waves, carrying in all more than 1 million tons of wheat, corn, beans, peas, and lentils from the United States. The ground shook as they rolled over the potholes.

Jerman shook with anger whenever he saw those trucks, for inside his warehouse, a vast concrete cavern, was an astonishing sight in a country then suffering from epic hunger: bag upon bag of *Ethiopian* wheat, corn, beans, peas, and lentils stacked in towering columns stretching toward the ceiling. This was what Chombe and Sasakawa's Takele Gebre wanted everyone to see. It was the bounty from the two seasons before, the bumper crop from Jerman's farm and from the fields of his neighbors in Aysi and Bale and the grain-growing regions out west. This was the fruit of Sasakawa and Borlaug's effort to introduce farming methods that would boost production. These crops were also preserved in white sacks, though they bore the green, yellow, and red stripes of Ethiopia. While American-grown food poured into the country, this homegrown Ethiopian surplus languished untouched.

Jerman, a short, wiry, energetic man, scrambled to the summit of one of his mountains of grain and comically posed for pictures. "I should hold a sign saying, 'Please send food. In Ethiopia we have no food!'" He howled wickedly. "I don't think Americans can imagine this."

No, in 2003, Americans imagined their food aid arriving to save the day amid blighted landscapes of misery where everything was brown, dying, and grim. Their perceptions of the situation—and of their own best intentions—were perhaps most clearly expressed on one of the trucks that rolled up to the Ethiopian government's strategic grain storehouse in Nazareth, groaning under the weight of American wheat and corn to be unloaded there. The truck's passenger-side window had been converted

into a strained-glass painting of Jesus. It was perfect imagery: Jesus, in Nazareth, bringing salvation to the Ethiopians.

Americans certainly didn't imagine their food aid arriving in green fields, rolling past warehouses full of local food. They didn't imagine African countries producing grain surpluses, certainly not those countries with all those starving people. And they certainly didn't imagine their aid being welcomed by bitter sarcasm from the local farmers.

"American farmers have a market in Ethiopia, but *we* don't have a market in Ethiopia," huffed Kedir Geleto, who managed a grain-trading operation in Nazareth. Kedir, with Jerman, led a tour of their warehouses in Nazareth, just off the main road from Djibouti to Addis Ababa. Doing a quick inventory in their heads, they estimated that at least 100,000 metric tons of Ethiopian-grown grain, beans, and peas were idling here. And, they believed, there were another 50,000 tons stored elsewhere in the country. It was surplus food they hadn't sold the previous year, when prices had collapsed. They had held it in their warehouses to prevent prices and farmer incentive from plummeting even lower. And now, with nearly 2 million tons of international food aid rushing into the country, the market was further undermined.

The two traders knew that their grain wasn't nearly enough to feed all of their countrymen, and, as Ethiopians, they were grateful for the international food aid. "We really appreciate it," said Jerman. Yet as farmers and businessmen, he and many of his colleagues were also disgusted and discouraged.

Jerman reported that some farmers hauling their own grain up from the south, hoping to sell it on the markets, had pulled a U-turn in Nazareth when they met the food-aid trucks coming in from the east. They returned to their farms and stashed the grain in flimsy storage facilities, breezy bins open to the elements, where insects and pests and the heat would ruin it in a matter of months. What kind of incentive was this for farmers to improve their harvests? With food aid flooding into the country, what was the use of producing a surplus?

"We don't oppose food aid. When there's a deficit in the country, of course we need it. But when there's plenty of food in some part of the country, then it's unbelievable," said Bulbula Tulle, Chombe's neighbor who had his own storehouse in Nazareth.

Why, the men wondered, didn't America provide cash aid to buy up the local surplus, and *then* send food to cover the rest of the shortage? "If the Americans really want to help us, to feed our hungry and to help our farmers," Kedir said, "first of all they must buy what is available from the farmers and merchants in the country."

But the Americans couldn't buy from the local farmers. Since the 1940s, the U.S. Congress followed the principle that American food aid must be grown in America. As the years went by, U.S. business and political interests had come to wield ever more influence over food-aid policy, keeping the focus on what was best for American agribusiness and for the politicians it supported rather than on what was best for the world's hungry. Even as American generosity grew—half of all international food aid is provided by the United States—so did its self-interest.

"If we take the perspective of the American farmer, it is logical to supply food aid to the world. This is the right policy for America," said Jeremy man. "But if the main aim of aid is not only to support American farmers but to support the poor country, then the donors must do what is best for the Ethiopian farmers and the Ethiopian people. If this is the aim, to solve the hunger problem, then the U.S. must change. Don't only send your food."

Following the 1984 famine, Ethiopia routinely had been the largest annual recipient of emergency food aid in sub-Saharan Africa. U.S. food aid alone was running at more than \$250 million a year leading up to 2003. As the volume of this emergency food aid expanded, the amount of longer-term aid to help develop Ethiopian agriculture and avert future famines contracted. In 2003, U.S. emergency food aid jumped to more than \$500 million, compared to less than \$5 million spent on agricultural development projects. And when that food aid came streaming in while Ethiopian farmers couldn't sell their surplus from the year earlier, a dark cynicism spread across the land: Maybe food aid was meant not to solve the hunger problem but to perpetuate it. "American farmers need Ethiopian famine," said Bulbula Blunty. "If American farmers aren't putting their crops in here, then where would they go?"

The dependency ran two ways. The regular deluge of food aid had turned Ethiopia into a global welfare state. And its reliance on the huge volumes

from the United States bred a bizarre dependency on weather and growing conditions in the American Midwest. "You hear people say they don't care whether it rains in Ethiopia as long as it rains in Iowa," said Mesfin Abebe, an adviser to the deputy prime minister and minister of rural development during the famine. He sat on a brown sofa in a government office building atop a hill in Addis Ababa, stirring a cup of tea. A photo of a donkey running across the desert rested on a wooden cabinet; a lonely red tie hung on a metal hat stand. The city and all its poverty sprawled beyond his concrete balcony.

"Food aid in Ethiopia has really perpetuated a dependency syndrome. The government is painfully aware of this," lamented Professor Mesfin, stroking his goatee as he gazed out the window. It was shameful, he said, that many Ethiopians had become so food-aid dependent, waiting in line for hours once a month to get their white bags emblazoned with the American logos rather than working to try to feed their families themselves. "They consider it their right to get food aid," he said, "whether they are starving or not."

A day's drive south of Mesfin's office, the 120 families of Boditi, in the highlands near Boricha, were starving. They were so desperate for food that they rushed forward the minute relief-aid workers began hauling bags of American wheat out of a small storage shed. Village elders, wielding long, thin whiplike sticks, chased back the most aggressive, particularly those scrambling about with reed baskets to capture any spillage from the bags.

Laa Lakamo, a father of ten, patiently waited his turn on his little plot of land beside the distribution site. "I don't have enough to feed any of them," he said of his children, some of whom stood at his side, holding tight to his legs. The drought had wiped out his corn and beans the year before. The area inside his one-room hut where he would normally store food was barren. He actually had less than nothing, he said, for he was in debt to creditors for two years' worth of fertilizer and seed. His clothes were in tatters. He balanced a square piece of black and green carpet on his head to ward off the blazing sun.

But at his feet, as he waited for his food-aid ration, green stalks of corn shot up from the ground, nearly to his knees. The early rains had been good, but he worried that the late rain essential to keep the corn growing

to maturity would fail, extending his dependence on food aid for another year. As he watched his neighbors at the distribution site carry away bag after bag festooned with the red, white, and, blue stripes of the donor country, Laa observed, "At least the rains have been good in America."

In Nazareth, 150 miles north of Boditi, a morning rainstorm flooded the streets. It was heavy but brief, ending as suddenly as it started. The skies brightened. Roosters crowed. But the mood in the warehouses remained dark. "If we keep getting good rains all over the country, the harvest will be good," Jerman said. "But still, the food from America will come."

Jerman carried a slim, hollow silver poker as he inspected his columns of grain. Randomly, he would thrust it into a bag of wheat or corn or beans, and retrieve a sample. "Look," he said, clutching a handful of corn. "It's suitable for human consumption. It's high quality."

Tamirat Haile Marian, a driver from the big city of Addis, leaned in for a look and gasped in astonishment. "I've never seen anything like this," he said. "We hear that we don't have any food in this country, that we must be fed by the rest of the world. But here is Ethiopian maize!"

A little moth fluttered past Jerman's face. He missed with a swat, then told his foreman, "You must fumigate." The last thing he needed was an infestation.

Jerman hurried to his wheat warehouse. No bugs there. "Come, come," he urged, approaching a tower of sacks. He inserted the poker and pulled out a handful of wheat. "This is better for us than U.S. wheat. This is hard brown wheat, good for pasta."

"This is unbelievable," said Tamirat, his eyes widening.

In Bulbula's warehouse, Tamirat grabbed some corn himself from an open bag. "Look!" he shouted. "Good for porridge!"

That gave Jerman an idea. "Lunch!" he said. "You'll see we have plenty of food, all from Ethiopia." Jerman led the way to the Rift Valley Hotel on the Djibouti-Addis road. While the food-aid trucks trundled past, the group ordered stir-fried fish and pork, Wiener schnitzel, beef kebabs, spaghetti made from that brown Ethiopian wheat, and lentil soup with the orange tinge of Ethiopian lentils.

"And in America they believe we have no food," Kedir scoffed as the feast arrived at the table.

Over lunch, Kedir and Jerman wondered if Ethiopian farmers would ever be as politically powerful as they believed American farmers to be. The two men were part of a group of grain traders and large farmers who had recently sent a petition to the prime minister's office, urging the government to seek money from donor nations to buy local grain for food-aid distribution before bringing in more from the outside. In the petition, they warned that if warehouses weren't cleared out soon, they wouldn't have money to buy up the coming harvest or space to store it. Peasant incomes would again collapse. Loans would go unpaid. Food would rot on the farms. Farmers would plant less the next year. The cycle of famine would keep on spinning. "And we'll never develop," Jerman concluded.

A waiter approached the table with a check for the lunch—less than twenty dollars for six people. Jerman moved quickly to snatch it away from the American in the group. His triumphant laugh filled the restaurant. "We have had enough free lunch from America!" he said.

On the other side of the world, in America, at the very same time, a coalition of U.S. farming groups was drafting another petition with a diametrically opposite plea. They were appealing to the White House for more food-aid exports. They wanted Washington to begin buying from U.S. farmers a minimum of 3 million metric tons of wheat a year to donate in food aid around the world, up from the 2.2 million tons of the previous year. American farmers were producing twice as much wheat as the country needed. That surplus needed to be moved somehow, somewhere, before prices fell. "We believe the U.S. government should 'Keep the Food in Food Aid,'" the letter said. It confirmed what the Ethiopian traders suspected: American farmers needed hungry Africans.

"We need food aid to get rid of our excess commodities," explained Jim Evans from his cab atop a wheat combine near the Idaho-Washington border. During the wheat harvest in America's fertile Pacific Northwest, Evans spent day and night piloting his John Deere combine, a twelve-ton behemoth that inhaled 1,000 bushels an hour, or about twenty-seven tons, over his 1,000-acre farm. He figured that about one-third of the roughly \$200,000 he generated annually from wheat, lentils, and peas came from doing business with food-aid programs. "Food aid has a huge impact on farms here," Evans said. "Without the business, I might have to get a job at Wal-Mart."

This region was known as the Palouse, a moniker taken from the French word for "green lawn." Probably no other place in America relied so heavily on supplying food aid to feed its own local economy. The climate made the hilly region uniquely suited for growing a few minor crops, such as lentils, peas, and the soft white variety of wheat. But the thing was, Palouse farmers grew a lot more of these crops than Americans could eat. Most of the wheat grown there was consumed overseas. What they couldn't sell abroad was snapped up by the U.S. government to use as food aid, which had been consuming about 10 percent of the crop. Without those food-aid orders, wheat prices would fall, and so would land prices, wheat industry officials argued.

In 2003, farmers on the Palouse and on the Ethiopian highlands found themselves in the same leaky boat riding out the turbulent waters of bumper harvests and lower prices. But the Palouse farmers had the food-aid market as a life preserver. "We feel it would be a disaster for U.S. agriculture if the system changes," said Thomas B. Mick, chief executive officer of the Washington Wheat Commission, a farmer-funded group. The Ethiopian farmers were left to sink.

The Palouse-grown peas that were cleaned and processed at Spokane Seed Company in Spokane, Washington, were used in everything from Campbell's Soup to Gerber's Baby Food. But still, there were plenty left over, so the family-owned firm relied on food-aid orders for 40 percent of its sales. "People here know their jobs depend in part on food aid," said Jim Groth, plant superintendent, as he grabbed a handful of dried yellow peas from a giant rotating cylinder. Those peas were making their way into bags embossed with the U.S. Agency for International Development logo, part of a 420-ton food-aid order for Kenya. Kenya bordered Ethiopia to the south, but none of the Ethiopian surplus had moved there. U.S. food aid had cornered that market.

Down the street in Spokane, at Northwest Pea and Bean Company, Gary Heaton rolled in the shadows of metal silos full of lentils. His most important job as manager was scanning the government's twice-monthly order list for food aid. One line caught his eye: The government was requesting two and a half railcars of lentils for shipment to Djibouti. By the end of the year, they would be steaming in on the road past Jerman's warehouses in Nazareth. "Ethiopia has been good for us," Heaton said.

The hunger business was keeping the U.S. lentil industry afloat. When swelling Canadian production sharply depressed U.S. prices in 2001, the U.S. government nearly doubled its food-aid purchases from American farmers to 83,000 tons, which was more than half of the Palouse's entire harvest. In 2002, Northwest Pea and Bean, part of a farmer-owned cooperative, sold one-third of its lentils and peas to food-aid programs, a business valued at \$2.8 million.

The plight of Ethiopia's farmers and commodity traders—and their plea that donors like the U.S. government should contribute money to buy Ethiopian crops for food aid—didn't get much sympathy on the Palouse. "The idea makes my hair stand up on end," said Jim Thompson, who raised 1,400 acres of wheat and lentils near Farmington, Washington. In August 2003, he sold \$20,000 worth of lentils to the government for food aid. "I don't feel like I'm to blame for the problems in the developing world," he said, standing in the middle of one of his fields at dusk. His face was haggard from a long day in his harvesting combine. "I just try to produce as much as I can so I can make ends meet."

America's food-aid program, run by the federal government, began with good intentions in World War I, when mining engineer and future President Herbert Hoover led private efforts to feed and clothe millions of war victims in Europe. But when federal money got involved, so did politics and politicians friendly to powerful agricultural interests. In 1949, Congress passed its first food-aid law, designed to dispose of surplus crops being turned over to the government by subsidized farmers. The mandate went forth: American food aid must be in the form of U.S. crops, not money.

With price-depressing American surpluses continuing to grow, farm-state legislators such as Senator Hubert H. Humphrey of Minnesota championed a permanent food-aid policy. A law passed in 1954, called PL-480, or more popularly, "Food for Peace," gave nations easy credit for buying American crops and gave the White House a big budget for donating U.S. agricultural products around the world. In its early years, food aid was responsible for more than half of America's wheat exports.

In the 1980s, Washington cooked up novel new outlets for agricultural surplus. Rather than dispatching cash grants to U.S. humanitarian aid groups for development projects such as digging wells and vaccinating children, the

government gave them food crops. The aid groups then sold these donations in the foreign countries where they worked, turning the food into cash. This circuitous system of foreign aid was given the Orwellian moniker *monetization*. Sometimes, these sales of U.S. food squeezed local products out of the market; in Ethiopia, several cooking-oil companies had gone out of business when a big shipment of American vegetable oil hit the market.

Over the years, a cozy economic equation evolved: When U.S. farm prices were depressed by production gluts, the volume of food aid rose. The size of American generosity seemed tied to conditions on the American farm. In 1999, the Clinton administration tripled the amount of wheat bought for food aid, buying millions of metric tons in the hope of lifting prices from their lowest levels in two decades. That effort included one of the biggest aid deals in U.S. history up to that time, as Washington spent about \$250 million to donate wheat to Russia, countering the efforts of the Europeans and others to sell wheat there. Two years later, when food-aid orders for rice slowed in 2001, lawmakers from rice states wrote the White House, complaining that mills were closing. The next year, federal purchases of rice for food-aid programs jumped 53 percent to \$81.2 million.

European food-aid policy had also originally begun as a way to get rid of surplus crops: Spurred on by subsidies tied to production, European farmers became famous for producing towering mounds of excess food. The additional costs related to these surpluses—separate export subsidies to move the commodities and payments to store or dispose of any crops that couldn't be consumed within Europe or exported—became a huge drain on the European Union's budget. Mounting taxpayer protests over these costs prompted the EU to change its farm-subsidy regime; most subsidies linked to production were scrapped, and the support was instead doled out as direct income payments to farmers to maintain income stability regardless of the amount of crop production. Within a few years, the overwhelming surpluses disappeared. And so did the rationale for moving crops through food aid. In 1996, the EU food-aid policy switched to donating cash to buy food as close to the recipients as possible rather than always sending food from Europe.

As Ethiopia descended into famine in 2003, the EU was thus able to provide cash to first purchase food available locally. In his warehouse, Jer-man Armente showed off 7,000 tons of grain packed in bags stamped with the Swedish flag; Sweden had donated cash to Ethiopia's disaster-relief or-

ganization, some of which was used to buy a portion of Jerman's surplus for distribution to the hungry.

Andrew Natsios, the administrator of the U.S. Agency for International Development, wanted to do the same. He felt handcuffed by the U.S. food-aid legislation in addressing the Ethiopian famine. Buying locally would speed up the journey of food to the hungry, he argued; gathering up and then hauling U.S. commodities halfway around the world could consume more than four months. Local purchases, he said, would also encourage Ethiopia's farmers by giving them a market. And, he insisted, it would be cheaper. U.S. legislation required that 75 percent of food aid must leave the country on vessels owned by American companies (shipping companies having borrowed a page from agribusiness's political playbook), which tended to charge some of the steepest rates on the high seas. Overall, U.S. officials calculated, roughly half the cost of getting American food aid to the hungry was being consumed by transportation, storage, and handling. World Food Program logistics experts in Addis Ababa figured that transportation and handling from the United States to Ethiopia in 2003 added nearly \$200 to the cost of each ton of grain.

Natsios, who grew up listening to stories of his family's experience with hunger in Greece during World War II, told *The Wall Street Journal* in 2003 that he would like to spend 10 percent of his food-aid budget on local food. But at that time he didn't dare approach Congress with that request. "It would cause a huge controversy" in the farm lobby, he said. "But we need more flexibility in the way the law is written."

He knew food aid was captive to the entrenched interests known as the Iron Triangle. The three sides of the triangle consisted of farmers and other agricultural interests, the shippers, and the humanitarian aid groups that distributed the food to the hungry. The farmers and shippers would vehemently fight any change to the requirement that all food aid be home-grown crops. And the relief agencies warned that buying food abroad and thereby slashing funds spent on U.S. commodities would erode the farm and shipping sectors' support for food aid. Without that political lobbying clout, the aid workers doubted they could win as much congressional funding for food aid solely on the principle that fighting famine and hunger was the morally right thing for America to do. Only narrow economic self-interest, they believed, could win the day.

When the petition from American farm groups asking for more food-aid exports reached the White House, there was no one with any political influence strong enough to oppose it.

Nor only did the Iron Triangle not yield to the needs of Ethiopian farmers in the 2003 famine, but its representatives boldly followed the trail of hunger looking for *more* business.

In the lobby of the luxurious Addis Ababa Sheraton, where classical music wafted around a water fountain and rearoom, a sign pointed to a reception on the second floor. The host was the U.S. National Dry Bean Council, which had come to Ethiopia in the middle of the 2003 famine seeking to get its members' beans into the food-aid mix. Although about 5 percent of U.S. production of dry beans—such as pinto beans and navy beans—went abroad in food aid, none was heading to Ethiopia. The Dry Bean Council was hoping to change that. At the reception, amid cocktails and petits fours, council representatives talked up the nutritious benefit of their beans with workers from international and local organizations that distributed the food aid. “We’re always looking for the perfect fit, where we can benefit our own industry and where we can relieve hunger in the world,” explained one of the council’s representatives in an opening presentation.

Wergu Mekasha had put on his best suit and arrived early. A short,regarious man, he was the local director of an American-funded group that helped organize small Ethiopian farmers into cooperatives. Some of his farmers grew beans. He thought this bean council from the other side of the world might be a new customer.

When Bob Green, the executive director of the Michigan Bean Commission, wandered by and introduced himself, Wergu enthusiastically grabbed the visitor’s hand. “Can you help our farmers sell their beans in America?” he asked hopefully.

“Actually,” Green said, “we represent American bean growers.”

“Oh,” said a crestfallen Wergu, dropping the American’s hand. “Then you’re our competitor.”

The next day, just outside Nazareth on the road to Djibouti, two Ethiopian lentil farmers were also surprised to be staring down their competition. They were barefoot, and wearing pants and shirts that were an assemblage

of rags stitched together in a riotous patchwork of colors and materials. Their fields, which they worked with their hands, were behind them as they paused to watch a caravan of food-aid trucks rumble past. From one of the trucks dripped a light trail of cargo. The farmers scurried to the road and scooped up some of the spillage: lentils, most likely from the Palouse, perhaps from Gary Hearon’s silos in Spokane.

“Why would America send lentils?” asked a third farmer, Bashada Iffa, who left his field to join the group. “We grow lentils in Ethiopia.”

During the previous four years, Ethiopia had produced an average of about 35,000 tons of lentils, and had even exported about 1,200 tons. Bashada, a young man in his twenties, was tending his own lentils on ten acres of land stretching along the Djibouti road when he spied the food-aid caravan. He had once welcomed American grain and beans and peas. The previous year, his family received about 65 pounds of wheat and other food aid to make it through the drought. But this season, the rains returned, and his corn, beans, and lentils looked good. He believed he might reap a surplus, especially in lentils. Now, he saw American food aid as a threat. “If we have a good harvest, I think these American lentils will only hurt our price,” Bashada said. He scratched his head, reaching under the bill of a blue baseball cap that had also come from the United States. “I think America should buy *our* lentils,” he concluded. He readjusted his cap. Stitched into the crown were the words *Good Luck*.