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**WFP, BILL & MELINDA GATES FOUNDATION, AND
HOWARD G. BUFFETT FOUNDATION JOIN FORCES**
Hundreds of thousands of poor farmers to benefit from new initiative

NEW YORK – The United Nations World Food Programme (WFP), the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, and the Howard G. Buffett Foundation today unveiled a groundbreaking initiative to help poor farmers across the developing world significantly increase their incomes.

The new initiative, Purchase for Progress (P4P), is expected to help hundreds of thousands of small farmers access reliable markets so they can sell their surplus crops at competitive prices, bolstering fragile local economies.

The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the Howard G. Buffett Foundation, and the government of Belgium have committed US\$76 million to this effort to transform the way WFP purchases food in developing countries, with a special focus on Sub-Saharan Africa and Central America. The initiative was announced during the United Nations General Assembly, where progress towards the Millennium Development Goals and the global food crisis are high on the agenda of world leaders.

“The world’s poor are reeling under the impact of high food and fuel prices, and buying food assistance from developing world farmers is the right solution at the right time,” said Josette Sheeran, WFP executive director. “Purchase for Progress is win-win—we help our beneficiaries who have little or no food and we help local farmers who have little or no access to markets where they can sell their crops.”

Sheeran was joined at the United Nations by Bill Gates, co-chair of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation; Howard G. Buffett, president of the Howard G. Buffett Foundation; President Jakaya Kikwete of Tanzania; President Paul Kagame of Rwanda; President Yoweri Museveni of Uganda; and First Lady of Guatemala Sandra Torres de Colom.

Developed in partnership with the foundations, P4P will be launched in 21 pilot countries over the next five years. Innovations in WFP’s local food procurement practices, which are central to the agency’s new business model, aim to strengthen the role of smallholder and low-income farmers in agricultural markets and enable them to gain more from supplying food to the WFP’s global operations. WFP will align its efforts with organizations such as the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA) that are focused on helping small farmers increase their productivity through the use of improved seeds and farm management techniques.

“Developing new ways for WFP to purchase food locally represents a major step toward sustainable change that could eventually benefit millions of poor rural households in Sub-Saharan Africa and other regions,” said Bill Gates, co-chair of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, which has committed more than US\$900 million in agricultural development efforts

focused on small farmers in Africa and South Asia, most of whom are women. Gates spoke a day before he was to address the UN's High-level Event on the Millennium Development Goals. "This is exactly the kind of innovative public-private partnership we need to advance the Millennium Development Goals and address extreme hunger and poverty around the world."

The majority of the world's poorest people live in rural areas, and most rely on agriculture for their food and income. Volatility in the food commodities and fuel markets has profoundly destabilized their already fragile economic situation. Millions of people have been pushed deeper into hunger and poverty.

WFP is the world's single largest purchaser of food for humanitarian operations that include relief and safety net programs such as school feeding. In 2007, while assisting 86 million hungry people, the agency spent US\$612 million on food in developing countries. With P4P, WFP will explore different ways to use its purchasing power in developing countries to maximize gains for small farmers while minimizing any distortion to local markets. By supporting small farmers' ability to produce and supply food to WFP's global operations, P4P will help them increase their incomes, which is critical in addressing hunger and poverty at their roots.

"P4P will help large numbers of small-scale farmers to become net producers rather than net consumers, ensuring that they stand to gain rather than lose from the current climate of rising food prices," said Howard G. Buffett, president of the Howard G. Buffett Foundation.

The initiative will also seek to promote local food processing projects to provide food of high nutritional value, allowing farmers to gain the maximum benefit from their crops.

The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation committed US\$66 million to fund pilot projects in 10 countries in Africa, and the Howard G. Buffett Foundation committed US\$9.1 million to support pilot projects in seven countries. The government of Belgium contributed \$750,000 for the project in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Three other countries have not yet been funded.

With the support of the foundations, and in close cooperation with governments, UN agencies, nongovernmental organizations, and private companies, P4P should significantly increase the income of at least 350,000 farmers in the pilot countries alone. The project will also identify and rigorously test practices that can be used to benefit small-scale farmers in other countries. Ultimately, the intention is to not only support farmers to capitalize on the market offered by WFP, but also to connect them to other local and regional food markets.

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Note to Editors

Video clips from the press conference, b-roll and other media materials available at:
www.thenewsmarket.com/gatesfoundation/UN

Video footage also available from marco.frattini@wfp.org

Photos also available from rein.skullerud@wfp.org

WFP now provides RSS feeds to help journalists keep up with the latest press releases, videos, and photos as they are published on www.wfp.org. For more details see:
www.wfp.org/english/?n=999.

WFP now has a dedicated ISDN line in Italy for quality two-way interviews with WFP officials.

About the UN World Food Programme

WFP is the world's largest humanitarian agency and the UN's front-line agency for hunger solutions. This year, WFP plans to feed around 90 million people in 80 countries.

About the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation

Guided by the belief that every life has equal value, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation works to help all people lead healthy, productive lives. In developing countries, it focuses on improving people's health and giving them the chance to lift themselves out of hunger and extreme poverty. In the United States, it seeks to ensure that all people—especially those with the fewest resources—have access to the opportunities they need to succeed in school and life. Based in Seattle, the foundation is led by CEO Jeff Raikes and co-chair William H. Gates Sr., under the direction of Bill and Melinda Gates and Warren Buffett.

The foundation invests across the agricultural value chain—from seeds and soil to farm management and market access—so that millions of small farmers have tools and opportunities to overcome hunger and poverty. The foundation believes that strong partnerships and a redoubled commitment to agricultural development across all sectors could help hundreds of millions of people—and entire regions—move out of hunger and poverty and build better futures.

About the Howard G. Buffett Foundation

The Howard G. Buffett Foundation has provided US\$83 million for agricultural production advancements for small-scale and resource poor farmers and US\$29 million for water development, delivery, and management in overlapping geographic areas. The foundation has focused on integrated approaches, including adoption of no-till farming techniques, improvement of soil fertility, agronomic training, participatory farmer research, and development of drought-tolerant and virus resistant crop varieties to increase crop yields. The foundation believes that building strong extension services, maintaining agro-diversity respecting cultural differences, and utilizing new technology will play an important role in addressing food insecurity in less developed countries.

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