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End to farm subsidies would help poor

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From Prof Yeomin Yoon.

Sir, There is an old saying: "Give a man a fish, and you feed him for a day. Teach him how to fish, and you feed him for a lifetime."

"President Barack Obama's grandiloquent pledge of a sweeping new US approach to development" and "the usual promises of cosmic amounts of aid" made at the United Nations summit on development ("[Aid to world's poor](#)", Editorial, September 25) sadly sound like blithely tossing the poor developing countries the equivalent of a few fish rather than letting some three billion people living in poverty fish for themselves.

As your editorial correctly points out, the US could and should end its farm programmes that push subsidised cotton and other agricultural products on to the world market. US farm programmes (subsidies and import duties on agricultural products) are expensive by any measure, costing Americans not only as taxpayers but as consumers and producers because of tariff barriers that artificially inflate domestic prices.

The damage of America's farm programmes (costing its non-farm households a cumulative \$1,700bn for the past 20 years, according to an estimate by Daniel Griswold of the Cato Institute), however, US non-farm households, but extends to the farmers in poor, developing countries who lose out in world markets.

History amply demonstrates that freer international trade is the single most important and fastest route for economic development.

As your earlier editorial ("[US must stand up for free trade](#)", June 22) persuasively argued, President Obama should be audacious enough to "confront its farm lobby and stand up for free trade", if he truly believes in his pledge to aid the world's poor.

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