US Food Aid in Southern Africa

Most people believe Food aid is solely an act of kindness and material help when another country is in distress. And in most cases, this assumption is partially correct. Countries, especially the US, give large amounts of food when a foreign country needs it. However, there are many lesser known "hidden" political agendas behind food aid, besides the moral purposes.

Many section of this wiki repeat the same points--this was a group project not a serious of individual ones.

A prime example of such "hidden" political agenda would be American food aid during the 2002 Southern Africa food crisis. Genetically Modified maize was sent as food aid to countries in Southern Africa with some countries such as Lesotho and Swaziland quickly accepting the GMO's due to their heavy dependence on trade with the US. Other Southern African countries such as Malawi, Mozambique, Zambia and Zimbabwe were more hesitant and viewed the GM maize as a health risk to its citizens. Most of the countries wanted the GM maize milled, meaning citizens would not be able to plant the GM seeds, thereby reducing the effect of GM crops on domestic biodiversity. But the US refused to do so (Zerbe 2004: 599). The inherent problem with this refusal is that the US had more then sufficient supplies of non GM food aid, so there must have been another reason they wanted the countries in need to accept the GMO's. The European Commission issued this statement about the "actual purpose" for the US GMO food aid which was "...to advance the case for GM food abroad, or planting GM crops for export, or indeed finding outlets for domestic surplus, which is a regrettable aspect of the US food aid policy (EC, 2003, np)". Because the US had so much surplus GMO's, and there was a large expense to store it, hence the US had to get rid of it in the form of "food aid". “Following the introduction of genetically modified maize in the United States in 1996, maize exports to Europe collapsed. From a peak value of $305 million in 1995, maize exports to the EU collapsed to just $2 million in 2001 (USDA, 2003). The increased competition for European markets from non-GM producers left the United States with large quantities of surplus maize which it was unable to sell on international markets” (Zerbe 2004: 606). Besides the agenda to alleviate the surplus problem through "food aid", there was also the agenda to introduce GM crops and foods to other countries. "Once GMOs have made an appearance on the market, and (mostly illegally) in the field, USAID’s Program for Biosafety Systems (PBS) can offer assistance to developing countries in the establishment of relevant mechanisms for import and use of agricultural biotechnology” (Lieberman, Gray 2008: 401-402). This action would open new markets for US food producers and biotechnology companies which is another economic agenda of humanitarian food aid. Food aid also serves as a political leverage against recipient countries. "Food aid serves both as carrot and stick in inducing recipient countries to comply with the foreign policy objectives of the donor” (Uvin 1992: 297). Ok, I see that this is a different topic than other sections--you should indicate the link to GM foods and markets in that first paragraph. Its also hard to see this as political rather than economic but I guess it has elements of politics.

Such hidden political and economic agendas in regards to food aid are less than admirable. Though many citizens believe that food aid is purely for humanitarian purposes, we can now see that there are these political agendas through the evidence presented here.