

World Food Prize
Laureate Statement by He Kang
October 18, 1993

Mr. Chairman, Members of the Council, Members of the Committee,
Honorable Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen:

It is indeed a great honor and rare privilege to be the World Food Prize Laureate. In receiving this prize, I consider it is not a recognition for myself only, but for farmers and all my fellow workers in agriculture, old and young, past and present, in China and many international friends who labored jointly with me during the past half-century. Furthermore, it is not a recognition for the agriculture area alone, but for all segments associated with the agriculture and food industry. I accept this honor with humility, on behalf of all of them. I thank the World Food Prize Foundation, my associates and friends for their confidence in me, and for their trust in China's agricultural progress.

A Chinese philosopher once said, "The very life of a country is its people, and the very life of the people is food." We all know that free from need leads to orderness, and free from hunger leads to self-respect. Without food, there is no life, no order, no society. I congratulate Dr. Borlaug for his wisdom in conceiving the idea of the World Food Prize.

~~I congratulate Mr.~~

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I congratulate Mr. John Ruan for his foresight in establishing the World Food Prize Foundation; I also congratulate the Members of the Council of Advisors for guiding its operation toward this noble goal. Following the steps of previous Laureates, I consider this prize is not for my past achievements, but more a challenge for my future efforts. It is not a recognition of my country's agricultural success achieved so far, but a challenge on how to maintain those new systems and continue to improve the quality of life in the years to come.

China is one of the oldest and largest agricultural countries. There are five historical agricultural characteristics recorded even in Sixteen Century B.C.. The first characteristic included intensive farming, sustainable management of fertilizer, soil, water, rotation, and pest control. The second characteristic is a multiple cropping system. The third characteristic is the emphasis on field crops but not sufficient attention to animal husbandry, except small animals such as pigs and poultry. The fourth characteristic is the side-business in the farming society. The fifth characteristic is that China always places agriculture on top priority. Those five characteristics were evident in traditional Chinese agriculture, which also affect China's efforts in current agricultural modernization.

During the past 44 years of agricultural development in China, significant changes may be summarized in the following four areas.

- 1. Agricultural production has increased.**
- 2. The structure has been reconstructed and the tendency to rely only on crops has been corrected.**
- 3. Commercial agricultural production has been developed.**
- 4. Farmers' income and quality of life have been improved.**

China is now feeding 22% of the world population with only 7% of the world's arable land. How did China's agriculture revitalization bring such achievement? We can only briefly outline several major factors as follows:

- 1. Planned economy combined with market economy.**
- 2. Overall planning for improving agricultural production taking into consideration of various limiting factors, for instance flood and drought, and make adequate adjustment.**
- 3. Stress on scientific research, education and extension service.**
- 4. Regionalized agricultural development in accordance with specific natural conditions.**

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5. Promoting rural and township enterprises and strategically transfer of excess rural labor force.

6. Promote international cooperation while developing national human and natural resources.

As we all know, Chinese agriculture is facing great challenges in the future. Population increase is estimated at 15 million per year, and arable land is decreasing 350 thousand hectares per year. In Year 2000, China will have to feed a 1.25 billion population with at least 400 kg per capita grain supply. In addition, we will need to provide an additional 100 million employment opportunities. In facing these challenges, we will need to work even harder, not only to maintain the pace of current progress, but need to continuously further improve the living standard and quality of life. Our approaches would include:

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Protect and conserve natural resources -- water, soil, air, germplasm, and all natural resources.

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Conserve energy and reduce environmental impact of agricultural chemicals.

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Develop and modernize agricultural systems, including seed industry, food industry, marketing system to promote value-added products.

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Change diet pattern and improve nutrition.

- * **Strengthen agricultural support services.**
- * **Increase agricultural investment, especially improve the infrastructure.**
- * **Further development of rural and township enterprises.**
- * **Intensify agricultural education and research both in basic and applied area to meet specific China needs.**

Ladies and gentlemen, Year 2000 is only 7 years away. Can we continue to achieve the miracle as we did from 1978 to 1992? During those 15 years, through government policy, farmer's incentive, and improved marketing and international trade, the gross output value of Chinese rural enterprises has reached a total 1,662 billion yuan (or U.S. 302 billion dollars) which is 66.4% of the total output of the rural society. It also employed 105.8 million workers which otherwise would be excessive in the farming society.

From 1949, when the People's Republic of China was established, to 1992 the production of grain increased 400%, cotton 100%, oil crops 650%, meat 100%, fishing and aquatic products 3,500%. Compared with the world standard, our per capita arable land is too small and grain availability is still too low. We are not satisfied that today we can provide an adequate supply of food and fiber to our people. In Year 2000, we are striving to improve even further to reach a "well-to-do" level in our rural society.

We firmly believe that we can achieve this goal in the not-too-distant future. The future belongs to those who dare to dream and are willing to work. Many conditions are in our favor. We are in the frontiers of new science and technology. We are enjoying stability and economic growth. We have the determination to make a better world for our children.

With your cooperation, and the cooperation of the world community, we can and must build a better tomorrow through abundant food supplies. Let us join hands to eliminate the word "hunger" from all over the world. Let peace endure.

Thank you.

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of stylized cursive letters, positioned above a horizontal line.