THE WORLD FOOD PRIZE 2008 NORMAN E. BORLAUG INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM

Confronting Crisis: Agriculture and Global Development in the Next Fifty Years

October 15-17, 2008 - Des Moines, Iowa

SYMPOSIUM BREAKFAST: THE SECRETARY'S ADDRESS

October 17, 2008 – 7:30 a.m.

Speaker: **Edward Schafer**

Ambassador Kenneth Quinn
President - World Food Prize Foundation

Well, the Secretary's Address is a special event for us because we have developed such a wonderful partnership with the U.S. Department of Agriculture over the past nine or ten years. We have the Borlaug Fellows here. USDA comes and puts on special panels as part of our program. We've been working with both the Foreign Agricultural Service and the Agricultural Research Service with Dr. Ed Knipling. You've brought large groups of your executives here. We've had the pleasure of having each of your predecessors, Secretary Schafer, be here to address the conference and to bring these issues forward.

So we are going to today, after the Secretary's Address, Secretary Schafer and I will be signing an agreement which is going to formalize the relationship between the World Food Prize and the Department of Agriculture and will provide us the ability to consult regularly together, to do things to bring leading figures from around the world, other agricultural leaders from agribusiness, from organizations, commodity groups and others here to make the World Food Prize events each year even more stimulating, more valuable.

I'm particularly pleased to be able to sign this agreement with Secretary Schafer because at the very first symposium that I ever organized as president of the World Food Prize in 2000, he and Governor Vilsack (he was then the governor of North Dakota) were the co-chairs of the National Governors' Association Biotechnology Partnership and came and gave a terrific panel at that time. You know, everybody talks about biotech now just kind of offhandedly, but at the time people weren't talking at all about biotechnology in terms of feeding the developing world. And we felt very good about being able to put forward at that time.

And the other is that the Secretary is particularly a leader in something called Fight Hunger and inspiring young people to do that. So I'm very glad that we have all of our students here today, Secretary, to hear you speak.

So to introduce you now, I'd like to invite Senator Chuck Grassley to me forward and to do obviously a much better job than I could do in introducing you. Senator Grassley is a great, great friend of the World Food Prize. Thank you, Senator.

Senator Charles Grassley

Good morning, everybody, my fellow Iowans, and our fellow citizens of the world. Thank you very much for coming to Des Moines, and I hope you find us the friendly state that we brag about being.

My life before the Senate and as a senator is a farmer in northeast Iowa. It's always nice to be here at the World Food Prize, and I congratulate the Des Moines entrepreneurship of the Ruan family for making this the home of this very important prize that's given every year – and to two of my former Senate colleagues this year, but to scientists around the years for the last 25 years.

This year's theme, *Confronting Crisis: Agriculture and Global Development in the Next Fifty Years*, is both an interesting and timely choice. We're entering a new generation in agriculture. This generation not only encompasses feeding the world, which has been the role of farmers forever, but also fueling vehicles and eventually getting into treating patients through pharmaceuticals through crops.

With these changes obviously come challenges, but they offer opportunities for biotechnology growth throughout the world that will continue to feed populations but also provide new prospects for our rural communities. Unfortunately, however, some potential trading partners are reluctant to embrace agricultural biotechnology. In doing so, they're rejecting a technology that is playing a major role in feeding a growing world population and alleviating pressures on the environment.

So I appreciate the efforts of Dr. Borlaug and others associated with the World Food Prize to educate skeptics on the benefits of biotechnology. At the same time, it is important to remind governments around the world of their international obligations to base their laws regarding biotechnology on science – sound science, and not on political science.

Advancements in biotechnology and other technologies will foster agricultural growth over the next fifty years. So I look forward to a new age of agriculture which promotes rural development and food security around the world.

Now, one person that I have the honor of introducing to you who has been at the helm steering us forward into this new agricultural era is our Secretary of Agriculture for the United States, Ed Schafer. He's no stranger to the World Food Prize, and I welcome you, Ed, back to this event.

Secretary Schafer was sworn in as the 29th Secretary of Agriculture on January 28th this year. He brings a record as a two-term governor from 1992 to 2000 of the state of North Dakota. He brings that experience to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, along with extensive private sector experience as both an entrepreneur and a business executive.

As governor, Secretary Schafer led the way of diversifying and expanding North Dakota's economy, reducing cost of government and also advancing agriculture as his top priority in office. He worked, for instance, to normalize trading relations with China, developing that nation as an export market for North Dakota farm products. He also led efforts to upgrade North Dakota's

communications infrastructure and made high-speed voice and data networks available to people in the rural areas as well as the cities, particularly important for entrepreneurial farmers today.

He encouraged value-added agriculture, bringing pasta and corn-sweetener manufacturing to his state. He happened to chair the Western Governors' Conference at a time when it was necessary to demonstrate how technology could improve the efficiency and lower the cost of delivering government services, such as health benefits and food stamps. He also worked to make tele-medicine more available and affordable in rural areas, absolutely essential to give rural Americans the same access to quality healthcare that people in large cities have.

As the chair of the Republican Governors' Conference in the year 2000, his last year as governor of his state, he co-founded and co-chaired the Governors' Biotechnology Partnership to increase public understanding and support the benefits of agricultural biotechnology.

Born and raised in Bismarck, North Dakota, Secretary Schafer graduated from the University of North Dakota in 1969 with a bachelor's degree in business administration and earned a Master's of Business Administration from the University of Denver 1970. Previous generations, he has great ties to family farming, and he brings that experience, as well as being an entrepreneur, to his present position.

Before entering public life, Secretary Schafer was executive of the Gold Seal Company, Bismarck, a successful marketer of nationally known consumer products, such as Mr. Bubble bubble-bath, you know, and other products. The company, by the way, was founded by his father.

After leaving office in 2000, Secretary Schafer co-founded Extend America, a venture-backed company, to provide wireless voice and high-speed data services to commercial and residential customers in five rural Midwestern states. So even though he leaves the governorship, even though he's a very successful businessperson, he's still concerned to make sure that rural America has the services that people in our larger cities have.

Welcome, Secretary Schafer.

THE SECRETARY'S ADDRESS

Edward Schafer
Secretary, U.S. Department of Agriculture

Thank you, Senator. I really appreciate the great introduction. Thank you for the warm welcome. It is indeed exciting to be here today. And we had a magnificent event last night, and I was just so proud to be a part of it. Thank you for the invitation to be with you for the evening; that was wonderful to honor two great humanitarians, Senator Dole and Senator McGovern are well-deserved of the World Food Prize. It is important that we recognize them, not for their lifetime of service but for the impact that they've had on people. And, Senator McGovern, thank you for joining us today. It's an honor to be at your table, and we appreciate you being here.

I also want to thank the past Laureates for being with us. We appreciate you staying active with the organization because the work that you do didn't stop upon the delivery of the prize. Importantly, you have made a commitment to continue your efforts to help feed people. And we appreciate that so much.

I really enjoy the young folks that are here today. Thank you for joining us. The Borlaug Fellows that are here, as well, but the Youth Institute is exciting to see. I have some friends here from the Chicago High School for Agriculture and Science. You know, the young folks here are the future of agriculture, and they're in the room, and they're learning from all of us who go before about how to make a commitment to agriculture, which I believe is the language of the world.

I am truly honored to be here in Des Moines to give the breakfast remarks at the 2008 Borlaug Dialog and World Food Prize. And, by the way, if you're still eating, please do so. I know that some of you got a late start, but enjoy your meal, toast your glasses, clank your silverware. As a former governor, I was used to speaking to the Legislature.

But I was really impressed last night with the recipients of the award, Senator McGovern and Senator Dole. These leaders share a common vision of what America's agriculture and the American people can do to relieve hunger here at home and certainly around the world. And they clearly saw the link of the bounty that American farmers consistently produce and how that can impact the world. They saw how we can fill the needs of hungry children.

In 1970s they did ground-breaking work to reform the federal Food Stamp Program, to reform that and expand the Domestic School Lunch Program, and they established the Supplemental Food Program for Women, Infants and Children that we call WIC today. You know, I had a school lunch Wednesday in St. Louis with some children, second-year, second graders. And, you know, the teachers that were there talked about how when those students in a poor area had a warm breakfast and a warm lunch, how they were more attentive in class, how they were more prepared to learn, how important it was for their education to have often the only two meals that some of those kids had in school. And the important work that was done here to help our people in the United States of America learn and grow and be educated is really important.

And then in the 1990s they looked far beyond our borders. They looked at the plight of some 300 million poor children around the world, and they sought to reach them with a global school feeding program, modeled on the success of the school lunch program here in the U.S. That effort began seven years ago as the Global Food for Education Initiative, and it quickly took off and now became the McGovern-Dole School Feeding Program. That evolved into the program that supports education and child development and school security in low-income, food-deficit countries that are committed to universal education.

You know, and there's more important things that come out of that school-lunch program as well. Not too long ago I was in California and I was having school lunch with some fourth-graders, and one of the boys that was sitting across the table looked at me and he said, "You know, is it true that if you find a strawberry or two strawberries that have grown together, if you give it to a girl, she'll fall in love with you?" I said, "Of course." And so the language of agriculture is important, even in school lunch.

You know, we heard a bunch of statistics last night, but some of them bear repeating. To date the McGovern-Dole program has provided meals to more than 22 million children in 41 countries. It boosted school attendance by 14 percent. And if you just calculate the women that we focused on last night and how important it is for them to get educated and increase their participation in school by 17 percent. Just in the last two years the program has fed 6 million people using nearly 190,000 tons of commodities.

Now, these are top-line numbers, but let me give you a sense about how the program really works on the ground, how it touches people's lives.

Zepeda Perez Garcia was a third-grader in La Libredad school in Managua, Nicaragua, in 2005. Her school was participating in the McGovern-Dole school feeding program, and she wrote a letter to Food for the Poor. Food for the Poor is a private, voluntary organization that are implementing the program for the U.S. Department of Agriculture. She says, "I'm writing to thank you for the milk that you send to our school. There are eight of us in my family. My dad is a gate guard, and my mom sells tortillas. I drink the milk that you send us every day in my school. It's delicious. I feel better in class after I drink that milk. Thanks to each and every one of you."

You know, we know there are millions of children around the world who are able to focus on their studies instead of their hunger because of this program. And we, and certainly they, are fortunate that George McGovern and Bob Dole both made agriculture-focused humanitarian causes part of their lives' work.

And now the challenge falls to us. You know, it falls to me and it falls to me to find new ways to help those who are still hungry every day out there in the world. We need to find that same compassion and dedication that these men displayed throughout their careers, and move it forward. We must have the vision and the commitment to ensure long-term global food security for the world's poor and the world's hungry.

We face a reality of the world population growing by 50 million people every year. And, of course, we're not adding any new land in the world, so we need to figure out ways to feed these new mouths as we grow.

And I believe the answer once again lies with building on the success of the American farmer. But rather than just the surplus commodities that we produce and we can ship around the world, our focus should be on sharing our technology, on sharing equipment and know-how and processes and procedures that made these surpluses possible. We must find ways to help farmers all over the world boost their productivity of their own land. And we must help them do what the American farmer has been doing successfully for decades here.

Just in the last 15 years our corn yields have increased from an average of 100 bushels per acre to 150 bushels per acre – 50 percent increase in yield in 15 years. With last year's corn crop and this year's forecast, the United States will have developed its two largest corn crops in history. And gains of this kind have allowed the United States producers to meet the rising demands of food and feed and fuel while maintaining record-level exports and strong food aid donations.

These gains are partly due to the new crop varieties that biotechnology revolution has given us. But other techniques like precision farming and good fertilizer regimes, improved irrigation systems and better water management have also played a strong part in this growth of productivity.

In June I had the privilege of leading the United States delegation to the Food and Agriculture Organization High-Level Conference on Food Security in Rome. The aim of this conference was to help countries find sustainable solutions to rising food prices and to new challenges of climate change and energy security. The aim of the conference was to help countries find sustainable solutions to rising food prices and to new challenges as we see weather patterns change and also to find energy security.

The aim of the conference was presented by the United States in a three-part strategy to address these issues. And with the current food aid as the first part of the strategy that we are presenting to the world, along with that a commitment over the next two years of how we will continue to send the dollars and the food abroad. But importantly, the third part – we also committed to helping other countries increase their crop yields so they will have the food and the fiber and the fuel supplies that their growing populations demand.

There are many barriers to overcome. There are poor roads, lack of refrigeration, lack of storage capabilities, rising fertilizer costs, limited knowledge of good farming techniques, resistance to biotechnology and other newer technologies – just to name a few. Longstanding issues of alleviating bottlenecks and promoting market-based principles in agriculture trade must also be addressed.

To help countries move past these barriers, the United States committed $5 billion over the next two years to help countries develop their agriculture. And our effort is to work toward doubling the production of trade and supply of staple foods such as corn and wheat and cassava and sorghum and millet in five West African countries.

To be effective, however, development assistance must focus not only on the immediate results but on the medium and the long-term term challenges of building capabilities for local crop production, for post-harvest management, and for trading of food products. Now, we know that new technologies and basic infrastructure improvements can make agriculture more resistant to climatic variability and to weather-pattern change. But it can improve farm economies.

I chaired a panel in Rome at the FAO about sustainability of agriculture. And especially the sub-Saharan African countries came to the microphone one at a time and talked about missing the Green Revolution. They couldn't take advantage of what Dr. Norman Borlaug created in this country, because they didn't have the infrastructure to do it. And they said, "Now as we look at expanding the food supply in the world, we need help. We don't want to miss it again."

And we need to make sure that that infrastructure goes forward. We need to invest in scientists and research institutions. We need to invest in market information systems and distribution networks and storage facilities. We must improve water management and irrigation. We must provide access to rural credit and livelihood programs for farm families. And we must work together to widen the use of existing and new technologies with the potential to significantly boost yields for commodity products.

In some countries this might mean just adapting the most recent Green Revolution availability, the technologies that are available, such as hybrid varieties that, again, Dr. Norman Borlaug pioneered. In other countries with greater challenges, environment and climate issues, new biotechnology-based solutions should be considered.

Today we know that biotechnology is one of the most powerful tools that we have for boosting agriculture productivity and for building prosperity among the rural poor. And there are some encouraging signs that others see the same possibilities that we do. Some countries are empowering their farmers to produce biotechnology crops.

Last year the amount of land around the world devoted to biotech crops grew by 12 percent to over 280 million acres. Biotech crops were grown by more than 12 million farmers in 23 countries. About 10 million of those farmers were small and resource poor. They were in developing countries. And for the 2008 crop year, the United States has already exported – already exported – $2.5 billion of coarse grains and oil seeds that were biotechnology-driven to the European Union.

I would encourage other countries to follow the lead of Burkina Faso in Africa, which recently decided to commercialize biotech corn, and Egypt, which is commercializing biotech varieties of corn. And they are both working on biotech cotton as well.

And two other African nations have initiated biotech field trials for our food crops, South Africa for sorghum and Uganda for bananas. Food crops like these can improve human nutrition. They also increase economic activities and farmers' income.

Biotechnology also offers us tools that can accelerate breeding and more accurately diagnose crop and livestock disease. This is especially helpful for economically important tropical crops, which traditionally have seen breeding be a prohibitively slow process.

We have had had positive experiences here in the United States with using biotech tools to boost yields and cut the use of herbicides and insecticides. They work with different climate issues. And now we're the largest government donor supporting the development of biotechnology crops. But the United States just can't do this job alone.

We need greater public investment by more diverse donors to provide equitable access to this technology. The United Nations agencies, the G8, the World Bank, the other international partners are critical resources to move these technologies forward and into everyday use, into helping people in need. In a developing country, more equitable access starts with establishing science-based regulations that can support the development of these technologies.

Farmers also need to open markets for the crops that are produced through these technologies. Toward that end, we believe that countries should adopt enabling regulations that give the private sector incentives to develop these new technologies. They should also honor the WTO obligations to facilitate the free flow of trade, the flow of goods and services and food across borders to where people need them.

They should support positions with international treaties like the Cartagena Protocol on biosafety. That encourages the development of new technologies. It protects biodiversity, and it really doesn't obstruct agriculture trade; it opens it up.

The success of any long-term strategy to reduce hunger and malnutrition demands the free flow of food and technologies that produce it. And biotechnology is an important part of that.

The sobering fact is that, in 2007, an additional 75 million people were undernourished, according to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the U.N. This brings the number of people hungry worldwide to 925 million folks. His Excellency Ban Ki-moon, the secretary-general of the United Nations, said food production needs to double by the year 2050.

You know, the citizens of the United States are very proud to provide more than one half of all the food disaster relief around the country. We're proud of our record of leadership. We have a moral and ethical obligation to share our agriculture bounty with those who are less fortunate. But we can't do it alone. We need to develop crops and yields to charge economic prosperity in rural areas for the poor and for the hungry.

At the same time we must fix the underlying problems that focus on a long-term solution rather than just responding to the immediate needs of sending food. Hunger and malnutrition affect every aspect of an individual's life – from health to education and from their ability to work and produce and to take care of their family. And without food security, economics suffer, incomes remain low, and people fail to reach their potential of full and productive lives. Our goal can be nothing less than eliminating the specter of hunger once and for all.

Ladies and gentlemen, we follow powerful world-changing precedents. The work of Dr. Borlaug is just amazing. Senators Dole and McGovern, we follow you as well. We must continue to realize your visions, to honor the legacy by finding new ways to harness our agriculture productivity to feed a hungry world.

And toward that end, in just a few minutes here, I'll be signing the Memorandum of Understanding with Ambassador Quinn. With this MOU we're formalizing not only the relationship between the World Food Prize Foundation and the United States Department of Agriculture but our shared commitment to science and research and providing a nutritious and sustainable food supply for people the world over.

And, you know, we're going to sign this document, and there are words on the paper, and we'll ink them and put our signatures on there; but, you know, it's a document, it's words. It doesn't matter unless we put it into action. And that's our call today.

And I'm reminded as I think about the call to action how important agriculture is in this arena. I recently was visiting with the United States Department of Agriculture employees in Iraq and Afghanistan. We have provincial reconstruction teams there working in an agriculture arena in two very different countries. In Iraq, a country that was led by a despotic regime and the agriculture infrastructure was neglected for 20 years; and in Afghanistan where the agriculture infrastructure was never developed.

And our teams are there and they're helping people develop that infrastructure. They're working on water systems and farm-to-market roads. They're providing reliable sources of electricity for refrigeration and storage capacity for after-harvest programs.

I was recently visiting with these teams via interactive video, and I talked to them about, "What's your relationship with the people? You're out there developing agriculture." And they talked about how they were working on processing facilities and storage facilities and how they were getting the productive capacity of the land in place. And I said, "Well, what about the people? You're there among them." And they talked about working shoulder to shoulder with people in the agriculture arena. They talked about being hand-in-hand in trying to help people grow food for their families and for their neighborhoods and for their regions, and how important that work is.

And I said, "Okay. But what about the personal relationships?" And they said, "You know, we're invited into their homes. We sit with them at their meals. We play with their children. We go to their weddings and their funerals. And they have become our friends."

And that is the language of agriculture. It is the friendship, the hand of friendship, that we can spread throughout this world. And I have no doubt that when you have peace in the home with people who are well fed and warm and comfortable, when you have peace in the home, you have peace in the neighborhood. And peace in the neighborhood leads to peace in the city. And peace in the city certainly gives you peace in a country.

And if we have peace in the countries through agriculture in this world today, I know that that language of agriculture will bring peace to the world.

So, thank you for all that you do. I really appreciate all your efforts. We have a lot of work to do, and we're ready to go, so join with me to deliver agriculture and food and promise to the people of the world. Thank you.