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The World Food Prize Foundation

Sponsored by The John Ruan Foundation, John Ruan, Chairman

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**WORLD FOOD PRIZE AWARDED
TO LONG-TIME CHINESE GOVERNMENT OFFICIAL
Former President Carter
Praises Winner's Contribution to
Chinese Human Development**

WASHINGTON, D.C. -- HE KANG, A CHINESE SCIENTIST AND LONG-TIME GOVERNMENT OFFICIAL, TODAY WAS AWARDED THE 1993 WORLD FOOD PRIZE AND PRAISED BY FORMER PRESIDENT JIMMY CARTER FOR HIS CONTRIBUTION TO CHINESE HUMAN DEVELOPMENT.

He Kang, who led an agricultural revolution in the world's most populous nation, is the eighth recipient of the annual \$200,000 prize, the foremost international award recognizing the achievements of individuals who have advanced human development by improving the quality, quantity and availability of food in the world.

Former President Carter, a member of the World Food Prize Council of Advisors, praised the vision and determination He Kang has brought to the task of feeding nearly one-quarter of the world's people.

"The right to food is the most fundamental of human rights," Carter said. "The contributions of He Kang have improved the lot of scores of millions of people and secured for them a better future."

He Kang, 70, provided the leadership to implement the vast agricultural reforms carried out in the two decades that followed the Cultural Revolution. From 1983 to 1990, he served as Minister of Agriculture under Deng Xiaoping, while China became self-sufficient in basic foodstuffs for the first time in modern history.

Minister He Kang continues to hold several government positions and remains an active and influential voice on agricultural and rural development matters within China and internationally. He Kang is heavily involved in ecological and environmental issues and serves as deputy chairman of the Chinese Environmental Protection Advisory Bureau and science advisor to the Environmental Protection Commission.

"Receiving the World Food Prize is one of the highest honors I have ever received," said Minister He. "I am very grateful to have been selected. I hope what we have learned in China will be of help to the world as we face the challenge of feeding our peoples."

Carter, in videotaped remarks prepared for a Washington news conference at which Minister He Kang appeared today, said that "this award is well deserved and I'm extremely grateful to be a part of a process that will recognize a notable scientist's contribution to the supply of food for China, which helps to open up China to the outside world, and in the long run will improve the free market system, will improve human rights, and will let us all participate in a better world."

The World Food Prize laureate was introduced at the news conference by former World Bank President and Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara and Dr. Norman Borlaug, who received the 1970 Nobel Peace Prize for increasing food production in developing countries. Both men serve with President Carter as members of the World Food Prize Council of Advisors.

"China's agricultural gains under the stewardship of Minister He Kang amount to something of a miracle, a human development miracle that has gone largely unnoticed in the West," McNamara said. "One does not have to read statistical reports to see the results. They are apparent across the face of China in the obvious widespread availability of food and the healthy appearance of young and old. Per capita consumption of calories is 10 to 15 percent higher in China than in India and about 25 percent higher than in Sub-Saharan Africa. And the increased productivity of China's farmers has enabled the higher output to be produced with fewer people, releasing large numbers for work in industry which, as a result, is also expanding dramatically."

Dr. Borlaug, father of the "Green Revolution" that dramatically improved crop yields in developing countries, said China's agricultural strides during the last two decades have generally gone unnoticed by the American public. "Many believe that China's agricultural system is archaic and unproductive," Borlaug observed. "That impression is far from the truth."

"China's spectacular progress in improving crop yields, especially of cereals, has made its farmers far more productive than their counterparts in India and the former Soviet Union. Cereal yields per acre in China are now only slightly behind the United States," Borlaug said.

Borlaug noted that China, with a population of 1.2 billion, has about 22 percent of the world's people but only 7 percent of its arable land. Under He Kang's leadership, Borlaug said, China was able to increase its agricultural output 8 percent a year in the early 1980's, far outstripping the country's annual 1.2 percent growth in population.

Three factors were key to China's agricultural growth, Borlaug said. The first was the development and widespread dissemination of knowledge for improved crop and animal production systems. Second was the construction of 12 large ammonia plants that provided Chinese farmers with steady supplies of fertilizer. The third was a liberalization of government crop production and marketing policies, implemented under the leadership of Minister He Kang. Those reforms effectively did away with agricultural communes, a staple of Marxist thought. The latter has been replaced with the market-oriented system of "production responsibility."

Minister He Kang also played a central role in the revitalization of China's agricultural schools and research institutions and in the systematic distribution of scientific information and assistance to farmers. And, although he has held high positions for many years in a government often wary of foreign contact, He Kang has been a devoted internationalist and a tireless promoter of international exchanges and cooperation.

Colleagues in other countries, with whom he has frequent professional and informal contact, describe He Kang as a warm man with an engaging personality and an encyclopedic grasp of China's highly diverse agriculture and ecosystem.

In all respects, Dr. Borlaug observed, He Kang is an ideal person to receive the World Food Prize award. Borlaug led the effort to initiate the awarding of this annual prize, since the Nobel Prize has no category to honor the work of those who promote human development through the improvement and availability of the world's food supply. The World Food Prize was created in 1986 to fill that vacuum.

The first World Food Prize was presented in 1987 to Dr. M. S. Swaminathan, who introduced high-yielding "miracle grains" to India. Other recipients include Dr. Robert F. Chandler, Jr., founder of the International Rice Research Institute in the Philippines; Dr. Verghese Kurien, father of India's cooperative dairy marketing system; Dr. John S. Niederhauser, a scientist whose discoveries resulted in a large increase in potato production in Mexico and other countries; Dr. Nevin Scrimshaw, a nutritionist who developed a low-cost, protein-rich diet to help prevent malnutrition in developing countries; and Dr. Edward F. Knipling and Dr. Raymond C. Bushland, retired USDA entomologists who developed a biological system to control insects.

Iowa businessman John Ruan, Chairman of the World Food Prize Foundation, lauded He Kang's work and said the new laureate was a living symbol of ideals the World Food Prize was created to promote. "With the global population increasing by 11,000 people hourly, all nations will continuously have to struggle with increased food needs," Ruan said. "It is important that the

world recognize such an outstanding innovator and role model and understand his contributions in order to prepare for our own futures."

The World Food Prize was founded in 1986. In 1990, John Ruan established the World Food Prize Foundation in Des Moines, Iowa and assumed sponsorship of the World Food Prize. The Iowa State University College of Agriculture serves as secretariat to the prize.

Each year, more than 3,500 institutions and organizations worldwide are invited to nominate candidates for the prize, which includes the cash award and a sculpture created by world-renowned designer Saul Bass in addition to the monetary prize.