

# Announcement of The 2009 World Food Prize Laureate

By

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Benjamin Franklin Diplomatic Reception Rooms  
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Secretary Clinton; Secretary Vilsack; Ambassador Assefa; Members of the Iowa Congressional Delegation Representatives Leonard Boswell, Tom Latham, Bruce Braley and Steve King; and also Mrs. Barbara Grassley, wife of Senator Chuck Grassley; Ambassadors, members of the diplomatic corps, and distinguished guests:

First, let me again express the great appreciation of our Chairman John Ruan III and Ms. Janis Ruan, my wife Le Son, and all of us at the World Food Prize Foundation, for the honor of once again holding our Laureate Announcement Ceremony here in the magnificent Benjamin Franklin Room.

It is a personal pleasure for me to be back home in the State Department in the room in which I was inducted into the Foreign Service and sworn in as Ambassador.

I also want to acknowledge the members of our World Food Prize Council of Advisors here today are: Al Clausi, Peter McPherson, and Cynthia Milligan; as well as past laureates – Per Pinstrup-Andersen and Catherine Bertini.

I regret that Dr. Norman E. Borlaug, the Founder of the World Food Prize, is not able to be with us today. I spoke with him a few days ago and he asked me to extend his personal greetings to you Secretary Clinton and Secretary Vilsack.

Dr. Borlaug established the World Food Prize to recognize and inspire breakthrough achievements in increasing the quantity, quality or availability of food – with the hope that it would one day be seen as the Nobel Prize for Food and Agriculture.

Laureates who have received our \$250,000 Prize come from countries and organizations around the world, including: Bangladesh, Brazil, China, Denmark, India, Mexico, Sierra Leone, Switzerland, United Kingdom, United States and the United Nations.

And they share one trait in common: their achievements uplifted millions and millions of people.

This year we add an individual from still another country to this pantheon of heroes, a Laureate whose agricultural work has impacted millions of lives in sub-Saharan Africa and indeed around the world.

Born in a remote African village, our laureate now serves as a plant breeder and geneticist on the faculty of Purdue University, where his research has dramatically improved the production of sorghum, one of the world's five major grains.

He developed and introduced the first sorghum hybrid in Africa in the early 1980s, which was drought-tolerant and produced significantly higher yields.

In the 1990s, he conquered the greatest biological constraint to cereal production in Africa – the deadly weed Striga.

Having discovered the biochemical basis of Striga's parasitic relationship with sorghum, our Laureate's breeding program at Purdue University produced many sorghum varieties resistant to drought and Striga – with yields ten times greater than the local varieties.

Our Laureate has further partnered with leaders and farmers across sub-Saharan Africa to improve management practices for sorghum, with his work being carried forth by a new generation of African agricultural scientists that he has personally trained and inspired.

It is my privilege to announce that the 2009 World Food Prize Laureate is Dr. Gebisa Ejeta of Ethiopia.

Dr. Ejeta will be presented the World Food Prize at a ceremony at the magnificent Iowa State Capitol in Des Moines on Thursday, October 15.

That ceremony will be held in conjunction with our International Symposium, the Borlaug Dialogue, which will focus on Food, Agriculture, and National Security in a Globalized World. This is a topic that President Obama and you Secretary Clinton have spoken about as being of great importance to this administration, and it is at the heart of Dr. Borlaug's legacy as well.

Secretary Vilsack, we are delighted that you will be able to join us and lead a ministerial round table at our conference. I have also just received confirmation that Bill Gates will deliver a major keynote address. Other speakers include His Excellency Joaquim Chissano, the former President of Mozambique, and agribusiness leaders including Ellen Kullman of DuPont/Pioneer; Indra Nooyi of Pepsico; and Patricia Woertz of ADM.

I want to extend a special invitation to everyone here to join us this October in Des Moines for what we hope will be the most significant observance of World Food Day anywhere around the globe.

Then, please go to our website [www.worldfoodprize.org](http://www.worldfoodprize.org) to register so that you can ensure your place at these events.

Finally, I encourage everyone to please consider nominating an individual for our Prize following the guidelines in our Invitation to Nominate which you were given as you arrived at this ceremony.

For a Foreign Service Officer, there can be no greater honor than to introduce the Secretary of State. As the world faces its greatest challenge ever in ensuring adequate food for all, one of the reasons we can have hope for success is the leadership she is providing on this critical issue. Ladies and Gentleman, the Secretary of State, the Honorable Hillary Clinton.