



WORLD FOOD PRIZE FOUNDATION NORMAN E. BORLAUG INTERNATIONAL DIALOGUE

2025 Norman E. Borlaug International Dialogue

Session Title: Laureate Award Ceremony

Date: October 23, 2025

Speakers

- Mariangela Hungria | 2025 World Food Prize Laureate and Senior Researcher, Embrapa National Soybean Center
- Mashal Husain | President, World Food Prize Foundation
- Hon. Kim Reynolds | Governor, State of Iowa
- Thomas J. Vilsack | Chief Executive Officer, World Food Prize Foundation

Transcript

Video Narrator:

All of us connected with this prize are delighted to see all of you here tonight. But it is intended to be a beacon, an inspiration to people who will bring arid lands to life, who will break cycles of hunger and starvation, pioneers who will beat down the barriers to our most basic needs: Nutritious, healthful, adequate food for all people. Heroes of our age and the ages to come on this earth.

Voiceover:

Welcome to the 2025 Laureate Awards Ceremony. Tonight we honor an extraordinary woman who has dedicated her life to ending hunger and providing nutritious food to all. Please welcome our guests of honor.

From the Republic Of Ghana, Ambassador Victor Emmanuel Smith

From the Republic Of Iraq, Ambassador Nizar Al-Khairallah

From the United Republic Of Tanzania, Ambassador Elsie Sia Kanza

From the Republic Of Ghana, the Minister of Food and Agriculture, the Honorable Eric Opoku

From the Republic Of Sierra Leone, the Minister of Agriculture, the Honorable Dr. Henry Musa Kpaka

Please welcome World Food Prize Foundation President, Mashal Husain.
And World Food Prize Foundation Chief Executive Officer Thomas Vilsack



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The chairman of the World Food Prize Board of Directors and the Council of Advisors, Paul Schickler

Vice chairman of the Board of Directors and the Council of Advisors, Rachel Ruan McLean

And President and CEO of Ruan Incorporated, John Ruan IV.

Please welcome our distinguished guests of honor, Her Excellency Jane Naana Opoku-Agyemang, Vice President of Ghana

Presiding at tonight's ceremony, please welcome the Governor of the State of Iowa, the Honorable Kim Reynolds.

Video Narrator:

There can be no permanent progress in the battle against hunger until the agencies that fight for increased food production and those that fight for population control unite in a common effort. Fighting alone, they may win temporary skirmishes, but united, they can win a decisive and lasting victory to provide food and the other amenities of a progressive civilization for the betterment of all mankind.

The war on hunger is not yet over, but each of our laureates has made a significant contribution toward winning a major battle and consequently providing a better way of life to millions of people.

Voiceover:

Tonight, we are joined by the women and men who embody the vision of Sr. Norman Borlaug. They are scientists, humanitarians, farmers and leaders, individuals whose discoveries and courage have changed the course of history from developing crops that withstand drought, to building resilient food systems in fragile nations, to advancing nutrition for the most vulnerable. These laureates have given millions the chance to live with dignity and hope. Each one of them has carried forward Borlaug's call to take it to the farmer to use knowledge in service of humanity and to never give up in the fight against hunger. Please join us in recognizing the World Food Prize Laureates who are with us this evening.

As we celebrate those laureates who are with us tonight, we also pause to honor the memory of two remarkable members of this family who we lost this year. Simon



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Groot, whose pioneering work in vegetable seeds transformed the diets and livelihoods of millions of smallholder farmers across Asia and beyond. His vision helped turn kitchen gardens into engines of health, prosperity and hope. Sir David Nabarro, whose lifelong dedication to global health and nutrition guided nations through crisis and brought hunger and malnutrition to the forefront of international action. His voice was one of wisdom, urgency and compassion. Though they are no longer with us, their legacies live on in every field harvested, every child nourished and every community strengthened by their work.

We are honored to have members of the World Food Prize Council of Advisors with us tonight. Their guidance and commitment sustain this mission, and we are grateful for their service. This year we also paused to honor President Jimmy Carter, the first member of the World Food Prize Council of Advisors. A personal friend of Dr. Norman Borlaug, President Carter shared his passion for peace and human dignity and even traveled with him to advance the fight against hunger.

His leadership, humanity and steadfast commitment have left an enduring legacy on the Foundation and the world. We likewise remember with deep appreciation our first executive director, Herman Kilpper, who alongside John Ruan and Norman Borlaug founded the Youth Institute. His vision continues to inspire generations of young leaders in the fight against hunger. As we reflect on the leaders who have shaped the Foundation, we are reminded that its strength also comes from the families who have carried forward its mission from the very beginning. Tonight we are privileged to have with us members of the Borlaug family and the Ruan family, whose vision, dedication and generosity built the foundation on which we stand.

We are especially honored to have members of the fourth generation of the Ruan family with us this evening, a testament to their enduring commitment to this mission.

Please welcome to the stage World Food Prize Foundation Chief Executive Officer, Tom Vilsack.

Thomas Vilsack:

Good evening. To everyone gathered here this evening and to thousands joining us via a webcast around the world, welcome. It is a profound honor to open the 2025



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World Food Prize Laureate Award Ceremony. We are grateful to be joined by senior government officials, business leaders, scientists, farmers, humanitarians and hunger fighters from every corner of the globe. Your presence here tonight reflects the enduring power of this prize to unite people in believing to build a more food-secure and equitable world.

On behalf of our board chair, Paul Schickler, my wife, Christy, the Borlaug and Ruan families and all of us at the World Food Prize Foundation, I want to extend our deepest gratitude to Governor Kim Reynolds for presiding over tonight's ceremony. We're also deeply honored to have the vice president of Ghana. Madam Vice President, Your Excellency, it is truly an honor to have you today in our presence, and your presence, I believe, underscores the shared global commitment to advancing food and agriculture. And to all the ministers, ambassadors and leaders of international organizations and institutions, thank you for your presence and your partnership and your leadership, which has added greatly to the stature of this event and to the global mission we share. Tonight, we gather to honor an extraordinary scientist and humanitarian, Dr. Hungria, whose groundbreaking work in soil microbiology has literally transformed sustainable agriculture and strengthened food security for farmers across Latin America and far beyond.

Her work has been extraordinary. And doctor, we are thrilled to have you and your daughter with us tonight. In honor of her and her remarkable contributions to agriculture and to sustainability in Brazil, we're bringing a bit of home right here in Iowa to you. To help us celebrate, let's see the vibrant culture, the energy, the spirit of Brazil. Please welcome Chicago Samba.

[Chicago Samba performs]

Voiceover:

Please welcome to the stage World Food Prize Foundation President Mashal Husain.

Speaker 5:

Obrigada por uma apresentação maravilhosa. And that's Portuguese for thank you for a marvelous performance. With your energy and artistry, you have brought the



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vibrant soul of Brazil to Iowa. Carrying the spirit and legacy of doctor Mariangela Hungria's work across the globe, reminding us that the fight against hunger isn't only waged in laboratories and fields. It lives in culture, in community and in the deep connections that bind us together. Building on this wonderful momentum and inspiration, we're proud to welcome to our gathering the students and educators of the World Food Prize Foundation's Global Youth Institute.

This week, 185 students from 24 U. S. States and nine countries presented their research on food security and agriculture. Addressing more than

[Audience applause]

Yes, indeed. And they addressed more than 24 global challenges faced in 76 countries.

The curiosity, the innovation, the unwavering dedication of these young leaders makes it clear that the next generation is not only poised but deeply committed to carrying forward Doctor. Borlaug's legacy and confronting the urgent challenges facing our world. And of course, we know that none of this would be possible without the incredible support and guidance of the 60 educators who joined them at the Youth Institute this week. Let's take a moment to give them a well deserved round of applause.

[Audience applause]

How about if we have all the students and teachers rise?

[Audience applause]

Understanding that behind every passionate young leader is someone who believes in them, it's my great honor to welcome an individual who champions education and empowers our next generation of changemakers. Please join me in welcoming the 43rd governor of Iowa, the Honorable Kim Reynolds.

Kim Reynolds:



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Well, thank you Mashal for that very nice introduction and thank you for your leadership and many years of service to the World Food Prize Foundation. I also want to take a moment to recognize former governor of Iowa and US secretary of agriculture, who currently serves as the CEO of the World Food Prize Foundation at Tom Vilsack. So thank you, Tom, for your continued service to this state and our country.

It is such an honor to join you tonight as we celebrate this year's World Food Prize Laureate and welcome guests from more than 75 countries to the great state of Iowa. Among them, a wide array of distinguished leaders including the Vice President of Ghana, Your Excellency, Welcome; numerous ambassadors; foreign government ministers; and prior World Food Prize Laureates; and of course the educators and the students, our future.

Your presence is a great honor to us and a testament to the significance of this ceremony. And finally, a warm welcome and heartfelt gratitude to the Ruan and Borlaug families. Tonight's ceremony reminds us that Iowa's extraordinary global legacy and of Dr. Borlaug's enduring belief that food security is the foundation of peace, prosperity and human dignity. Each year, this ceremony brings together scientists, innovators and hunger fighters from around the world—people united with a single but profound goal to ensure that every person in every nation has access to safe, affordable and nutritious food.

This evening, we celebrate a scientist whose work embodies that mission, Dr. Hungria. Her work represents the very best of what Dr. Borlaug envisioned, science in service to humanity—a towering pioneer in the field of biology with a deep commitment to serving others.

And now as the governor of this great state, it is a privilege to read and sign the following proclamation celebrating Dr. Hungria's contributions to global food security. Whereas the World Food Prize was founded in 1986 by Iowa native Dr. Norman E. Borlaug, to recognize those individuals who have advanced human development by improving the quality, quantity or availability of food in the world.

And whereas Iowa philanthropist John Ruan endowed the World Food Prize to ensure that Nobel-like achievements in food and agriculture are recognized every year by the awarding of a cash prize. And whereas the state of Iowa and the Iowa



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legislature have expressed consistent support for the mission of the World Food Prize and have enacted a permanent day of recognition on October 16 as Norman Borlaug World Food Prize Day. And whereas Dr. Hungria of Brazil has been chosen to receive the 2025 World Food Prize for her extraordinary scientific advancements in biological nitrogen fixation transforming the sustainability of soil health and crop nutrition for tropical agriculture. And whereas, the low cost technologies and products that she has developed have increased crop productivity, affordability and sustainability across tens of millions of hectares.

And whereas, by harnessing symbolic soil microorganisms as an effective alternative to synthetic fertilizers, she has not only improved plant nutrient uptake, but also enabled farmers to save billions of dollars while mitigating environmental risk, producing more with less. So now therefore, I, Kim Reynolds, Governor of the State of Iowa, do hereby proclaim Dr. Hungria of Brazil as the 2025 World Food Prize Laureate.

Video Narrator:

In 1966, in a small town in Brazil, an eight year old girl unwrapped a gift from her grandmother. It was a book, Microbe Hunters by Paul de Cruef. Inside its pages were stories of scientists who unlocked invisible worlds, who forever changed the course of human history.

Mariangela Hungria:

Since I was a child, I dreamed of being a microbiologist and fighting against hunger, but it seemed improbable that I could ever succeed. Even so, I chose to be an agronomist.

Video Narrator:

Her teachers urged her to choose a different path, but she refused to be deterred and she enrolled in the Luis de Quiros College of Agriculture at the University of Sao Paulo. It was the late 1970s. Soil science was dominated by men. Fertility was defined by chemicals and soil microbiology was an afterthought. Hungria's focus was on nitrogen, an essential nutrient typically supplied by expensive chemical fertilizers.



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Her idea was bold—use naturally occurring bacteria to provide nitrogen to crops, reducing environmental harm and cutting costs for farmers. The microgreen revolution was born. Hungria earned her doctorate at the Federal Rural University of Rio de Janeiro, and she set out to build an ambitious research program from scratch. Through decades of research and development at Embrapa Soja, the National Soybean Center of Brazil, Hungria built her field of study from the ground up.

She developed more than 30 technologies related to microorganisms, including a range of microbial inoculants for soybeans, common beans, maize, wheat, rice, pasture grasses and other major crops. She focused on the lead strains of Rhizobia, a symbiotic bacteria that forms nitrogen fixing nodules on the roots of legumes. She tested their effects on crops and identified varieties that responded best to the microorganisms. Yet Hungria's work went far beyond the laboratory. In the spirit of Norman Borlaug's Take It to the Farmer philosophy and vision, Hungria spent as much time in the field working with farmers as she did in the lab.

She led field days, conducted extension training and wrote technical pamphlets. In 1994, she published the first Portuguese language manual for tropical soil microbiology methods. These efforts ensured that her scientific breakthroughs translated to real world impact. As a professor, Hungria trained and mentored over 200 young researchers, nurturing the next generation of agricultural scientists. She has published over 500 scientific articles, technical manuals, books and book chapters communicating her findings with clarity and accessibility.

Hungria has been a staunch advocate and mentor for women in science. She guides her students with both rigor and compassion, sharing her experiences as a scientist and mother to inspire others navigating this balance. Her mentorship has empowered countless women to pursue and thrive in agricultural science careers. Her work has transformed Brazilian agriculture. The microbial inoculants she helped develop are now applied to more than 40,000,000 hectares in Brazil and have spread to farms globally.

Microbial inoculation is now used on 85% of Brazil's soybean fields, more than 30,000,000 hectares, the highest adoption rate in the world. Her innovation saved Brazilian farmers an estimated \$25,000,000,000 annually, prevent 230,000,000 metric tons of CO₂ equivalent emissions and boost yields beyond what synthetic fertilizer can achieve. Brazil has become the world's leading soybean producer and



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exporter with Hungria's work laying the foundation for the country's agricultural and economic growth over the past several decades. In a time of immense pressure to produce more food with less resources and lower environmental impact, her pioneering work advances sustainable production, eco-innovation, recarbonization, one health and above all, food security. Through her groundbreaking research, commitment to sustainable crop production and dedication to education, Hungria has earned global recognition as a transformative agricultural scientist.

For these extraordinary contributions, we proudly recognize Dr. Mariangela Hungria as the 2025 World Food Prize Laureate.

Voiceover:

Ladies and gentlemen, please welcome the 2025 World Food Prize Laureate, Dr. Mariangela Hungria.

At this time, please welcome Vice Chair of the World Food Prize Board of Directors, Rachel Ruan McLean, to the stage; Vice President of Ghana, Her Excellency Jane Naana Opoku-Agyemang; Chief Executive Officer of the World Food Prize Foundation, Thomas Vilsack; President and CEO of Ruan Incorporated, John Ruan IV; President of the World Food Prize Foundation, Mashal Husain; Chair of the World Food Prize Selection Committee, Gebisa Ejeta; the Chairman of the World Food Prize Board of Directors and the Council of Advisors, Paul Schickler.

The World Food Prize sculpture will now be presented to the twenty twenty five Laureate by Rachel Ruan McLean and Her Excellency Jane Naana Opoku-Agyemang.

Dr. Ejeta, Mrs. Husain, Governor Vilsack, and Mr. Ruan, Mrs. Ruan McLean, Mr. Schickler, Your Excellency, we now invite you to return to your seats.

Now we invite our Laureate to offer her remarks.

Mariangela Hungria:

Thanks a lot. I have three minutes to talk. Since I was a child, I dreamed of becoming a microbiologist and fighting hunger. Although it seemed improbable that I could ever succeed, I chose to become an agronomist and to specialize in soil microbiology.



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Forty five years ago, despite intense pressure to pursue a career focused on chemicals, I followed my heart and my belief in a productive yet sustainable agriculture, one that replaces chemical inputs with biological alternatives wherever possible.

I have dedicated my life to biologicals. My weapons have been rigorous science, validation of farmer's fields and constant advocacy for the environmental sustainability. I'm confident that we are continuing Dr. Norman Borlaug's dream into a new vision, a micro green revolution driven by biological inputs. Today, I see farmers everywhere seeking more sustainable practices, and I deeply admire Brazilian farmers who are responsible for our global leadership in the use of biologicals.

I feel especially honored to receive this prize as a woman. For centuries, women's roles in agriculture have been invisible and unrecognized. Yet, in most countries, we are the ones cultivating the land, saving the best seeds and passing down traditional knowledge through generations. I'm sure that we will lead the agriculture of the future, one that produces enough food, higher protect the planet and restoring soil health.

I want to thank my institution in Embrapa, which has always believed in and supported research with biologicals, benefiting society equally, from large to small farm. This is what public institutions should do and that's why they deserve respect and investment. Thanks a lot to all my colleagues and my students. Finally, with deepest love, I want to thank my daughters, Carol and Marcella, for their patience with my lifelong dedication to science and work. I'm sure that being a mother has made me a better scientist.

And finally, I want to thank the Foundation very, very much for this unimaginable honor. It's a great responsibility to receive this prize, and I promise I will continue to fight hunger and to promote agriculture sustainability until the last day of my life.

Mashal Husain:

Thank you, Dr. Hungria, for your inspiring and heartfelt words, and welcome to the World Food Prize family. Your unwavering dedication and leadership to making the world a better place reminds us why the World Food Prize exists. To recognize those



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who transform possibility into progress and science into hope for communities around the world. Tonight, we have celebrated not only your extraordinary achievements, but also the legacy of Dr. Borlaug, the vision of the Ruan family and the collective commitment of all those who are gathered here to fight for a world without hunger.

On behalf of the World Food Prize Foundation, thank you to our Laureates, our distinguished council of advisors and to all our guests for joining us in this celebration of leadership, courage and humanity.

[Musical performance]

Thomas Vilsack:

I'm not sure who thought it was a good idea to have a guy without any rhythm follow that. What an incredible performance. Adrian, thank you so much for bringing your energy and your artistry and passion to this celebration. You really have truly helped us close this evening on a high note. And most importantly to all, thank you again to our 2025 World Food Prize Laureate, Dr. Hungria.

Your groundbreaking work, your passion, your persistence, your belief in your farmers has inspired all of us to keep pushing forward with the common knowledge and the common cause in our fight against hunger. Your dedication reminds us and your commitment reminds us of why this prize exists. You know, as I listened to your remarks, it occurred to me that we really should take just a moment to thank your grandmother. I don't know what the rest of you were doing when you were eight years old, but if you looked at that book that grandma gave our laureate and she actually read it and absorbed it and was inspired by it, God bless her. Let's give her a round of applause.

Well, you now join an august group. And to all of our laureates, past and present and to all the distinguished guests who are here and to everybody who's joined us tonight, your presence and your collective commitment and your leadership continues to make a real difference in this world as we focus on the effort to make our world a food and nutrition secure world.



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On behalf of the World Food Prize Foundation, we thank you all for being part of this celebration of courage, innovation and humanity. And we hope you enjoy the rest of the evening. Thank you very much.