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Speakers

- Facilitator: Amb. Kenneth M. Quinn | President Emeritus, World Food Prize Foundation
- Jason Brantley | Vice President of Production Systems, Small Ag & Turf, John Deere
- Valerie Guarnieri | Assistant Executive Director, Programme Operations, World Food Programme
- Chris Nelson | 2024 Top Agri-food Pioneer and President and Chief Executive Officer, Kemin Industries
- Kathy Pickus | Chief Sustainability Officer, ADM

Transcript
Amb. Kenneth Quinn:

Welcome to the panel Valerie. That was such a wonderful presentation. I just wanna say I knew, uh know executive director Cindy McCain from my time at the state department and working with senator John McCain to assure the fullest possible accounting of our POW MIAs, and so if you would be so good as to convey from me and I'm sure from everyone here our warmest wishes that she has a full speedy recovery and back in the game again, so if you all could join me in sending message to her. So now we have three wonderful leaders from the agri-business world to speak about their organization, their company's pillars of philanthropy, and why global food security is important to them. And so I want to begin with Jason Brantley from John Deere. Everyone knows John Deere and the day when Iowa opened for settlement in 1838 it was John Deere and his plow that was opening the way and still engaged and playing a big role in Iowa's economy Jason to you.

Jason Brantley:

Thank you Ambassador Quinn it's an honor to be here with you today. Just real quick again I'm Jason Brantley I'm Vice President for small agriculture and turf production systems globally, which includes the customer segments that we serve small holder and small acre farmers, as well as high value crop, dairy and livestock and turf. At

John Deere when we think about philanthropy, we really have three pillars that we organize around and there's a common thread through all of it. We focus on supporting farmers, we focus on empowering families and youth, and we focus on really mobilizing our employees to support causes that are important to them. For farmers, we have a range of different programs and different approaches around the world, but with smallholders and smallholder contractors we know that those that feed and clothe and help build the world are many times most at risk, and many times need support in order to lift themselves up and move forward. So that's an area that we really focus on a lot. We've committed over fifty million dollars over the next decade to support programs with partners like the World Food Programme and with One Acre Fund and others to really focus on that area. When we think about youth and families, we really want to engage there. We support food banks, education programs. We've committed over a hundred million dollars over the next decade to really focus in those areas and the communities that we serve, and finally mobilizing employees. We support our employees through paid time off to volunteer, as well as matching their investment in their communities in order to really support and build that. So the common thread through all of these is around food and hunger and poverty alleviation and we see that not just as a philanthropic goal, but a moral imperative that John Deere, back to our very very start as you mentioned, has been around improving food production. Thank you.

Amb. Kenneth Quinn:

So I want to turn now to Chris Nelson, President and CEO of Kemen, just to say that his dad R.W. Nelson passed away earlier this year. I was so pleased we were able to award him and your mother the Robert D. Ray Iowa Shares Humanitarian Award in 2019 during my last term as President. So Chris to you.

Chris Nelson:

Ken, thank you very much and it is really my honor to be here this morning. Kemin Industries is a worldwide organization, we manufacture ingredients that go into foods, into pet foods, nutraceuticals, as well as animal feed. Been in business since 1961 and founded by my father and mother at that time. Our pillars of philanthropy really come down to three also, I think that's Jason must be the number to do. Number one for us is food. We manufacture ingredients that go into a large number of foods on a worldwide basis, through all continents, and so food security in our

minds is an absolutely part of overall responsibility as a food manufacturer, and for that reason alone we have made it our number one overall priority. Our second priority is science education. We really truly believe that scientists will be able to continue to be able to expand technology and thus feed the world in that way. As really eloquently talked about by Valerie a few minutes ago, there's no doubt that we've made tremendous, tremendous overall improvements in the last few years. There's still a ways to go without question. Finally, safe housing for individuals is our third pillar. We work on an international basis with Habitat for Humanity in that area, and really feel that a safe home is once you have food, a safe home becomes the next necessity that you have, and those three we have been able to support really both through our monetary contributions, but also directly with World Food Programme has been one of our favorite groups to be a partner with over the years. We have two full time scientists in Belgium who basically work for the WFP in a Kemin laboratory to test foods that they manufacture. So really a pleasure to be here this morning Ken.

Amb. Kenneth Quinn:

So Kathy Pickus is the Chief Sustainability Officer at ADM. I got to know ADM in 1980 when I took Xi Jinping's father around Iowa at the very beginning of the U.S.-China diplomatic relations and we stopped and had a great lunch at ADM and he learned a lot about the company, so I hope that was helpful.

Kathy Pickus:

That is awesome Quinn, thank you so much for the introduction and again it's a pleasure to be here and to speak about what I find is a consistent theme across this panel, and that's partnership and focus, leveraging our core competencies as businesses to really enable change. So with ADM we have again three areas of focus in our philanthropy, but it's focused on what we do fundamentally as a business, as we sit at a very unique position in the value chain, focusing very much on agriculture and farmers and how we look at that throughout the value chain in terms of leveraging our ability to source and to distribute and to reach different communities in need. So we focus specifically on sustainable agriculture, and we also focus on increasing food security, and then we wrap up our final third area of focus on education and how we advance agricultural education worldwide and focus specifically on STEM. The World Food Programme is a key partner to ADM's philanthropy, we've donated four million dollars over the past couple of decades to

those programs, and we've also partnered in areas where we have the most, you know, kind of ability to drive impact and I love the fact in terms of leveraging your scientific expertise, that's a real value in terms of driving change in the world. Very happy to be here.

Amb. Kenneth Quinn:

So Valerie people thought I might have been rude skipping over you, but back to you I just want to note that the World Food Prize has a long association with the World Food Programme in addition to our initials being confused, WFP and that, but Catherine Bertini was the second woman laureate in 2003, then both Josette Sheeran and Ertherin Cousin were very close supporters and involved with us. Now coming back, and you've heard from our three panelists and why is this what they do, why are these public-private partnerships so important in your view?

Valerie Guarnieri:

Well you mentioned Catherine Bertini, it was a delight to see her last night. We see Catherine as the mother of WFP, she is my first boss, brought me into the organization, and continues to be so committed and so involved to food security at large but also the work of the World Food Programme so very much a a shout out to Catherine, who I hope is is here but is certainly listening. There she is, alright there she is, round of applause for Catherine. Thank you so much. Bridging then to our current executive director Cindy, Cindy McCain thank you for your kind words, which I will convey. You know when she came on board two years ago, she highlighted that private sector innovation and partnerships were the key to our ability to actually deliver, and I think we're just seeing that more and more today, and partners like the three who are here on this stage are so key on that. We really believe in the transformative power of private partnerships. I spoke about the funding shortfalls that we're facing, 40% reduction as compared to last year. Many governments, including our government here, stepping back on their contributions and the private sector and private individuals have been stepping in to that breach, and we now see the private sector as among our top five donors, more than two billion generated through the private partnerships over the past five years. So huge, huge support there, but it's not just about the financing, it is about the engagement, it's about the innovation, it's about bringing practices that are part of the bottom line in the private sector to the work that we're doing around the world. It helps us make our work

more agile, more efficient, and more effective. This is absolutely key and fundamental to ending hunger, as I think pretty much this audience should know quite well.

And if I look at the three companies here, we have the involvement that we're doing with Kemin, which is helping us extend the shelf life of our products and the nutrient content of our products over time. I mean that's absolutely fundamental in situations where you know, you talk about long supply chains. Well, the supply chain into South Sudan is very long, it's nine months from when you're bringing the food to when it's actually being distributed to people, and we need to make sure that that food stays of a very high quality as long as possible so that we can feed people. John Deere, clearly a giant in the agricultural space, has been supporting us with our innovation accelerator, which is a place where we bring together ideas and solutions and we test them and incubate them and take them to scale and that support has been absolutely instrumental for us being able to stay at the cutting edge. And then with ADM we've been involved in working on support for our school meals programs, our emergency programs, and these are programs where we were supporting the largest safety net in the world, ensuring that children benefit from a nutritious meal in school. Feeds children today, feeds their minds for tomorrow, but also benefits economies when the food is sourced locally and regionally. So really a good sign here of why private sector matters and why it's key for ending global hunger, thank you.

Amb. Kenneth Quinn:

You're referencing the school feeding programs reminds me of how we honored Senator George McGovern and Robert Dole with World Food Prize Laureates Catherine Bertini, had a wonderful interaction with them and stressing the bipartisan nature of support for feeding hungry people and the world through the World Food Programme. Valerie just mentioned innovation, why is innovation a big deal at John Deere Jason?

Jason Brantley:

Yeah thanks for the question. You know I think innovation plays at a lot of different levels, in part it's a big deal because it's just hardwired into our culture. We started with an innovation that solved a problem that allowed farmers in the midwest for the first time to be able to reliably feed their families and those around them and so we

always come back to that, it really is a core value. I think when you look at farmers today, both big and small, the problems that they're trying to solve, to be able to produce more with limited resources, to be better stewards of the environment and use less inputs, to be able to remain profitable through swings in the market and and different, different challenges that are there and the list goes on. It's clear that innovation, whether it be through technology, or business model, or partnership is going to be how we can help solve these. So at Deere we take that pretty seriously, we appreciate the partnerships that we have like with the World Food Programme, and the ability to invest in the accelerator, and to learn together and to have those impacts.

We're also prioritizing some of our investment in our business to create platforms for change in the future, I think probably the best example of that is connectivity. So precision ag is pretty, pretty if you go outside these doors it's pretty common here close by and it's and it's advanced a lot self driving tractors are maybe the most visible part but the most impactful is on how inputs and yield is managed so much more effectively today. All of that relies on a foundation of connectivity where the machines are able to document and create data that could support better decision making and planning and execution over time. We've made the decision to put that base connectivity and connectivity enablement in every cell propelled machine that we sell globally into agriculture, regardless of the size and so over the next couple of years we've got most of these already done by the end of 26' almost all will be complete, but even the smallest tractors sold into India or sub-Saharan Africa is going to have connectivity capability that we'll be able to work with partners to unlock and create new approaches to solve problems for farmers. So we're excited about the role that innovation can play, and looking forward to the future.

Amb. Kenneth Quinn:

Chris, I saw you nodding when you talked about increasing that shelf life and nutrient content, so critical when you're moving food and have to store it and then rush it out to hungry people. But social impact is another focus of Kemin.

Chris Nelson:

Let me talk just a little bit about that overall Ken, is that there's no question that the World Food Programme has evolved actually into one of the world's largest food

manufacturers these days. Because they've seen the commitment that just giving grains in situations such as we see in Sudan is impractical just because people can't cook them, they don't have the ability to eat foods that are actually ready to eat. The problem of course, with foods that are ready to eat, is that shelf life becomes very, very limited and you may put those foods together in one location and then have to ship them through a long supply chain to be able to get to the final place. We manufacture a whole series of products that are able to extend shelf life through prevention of oxidation, which is the principal problem in those foods. Applying those and understanding how they work in a particular matrix is a whole innovative process that has to occur, and we've been proud to be able to do that. We see the future though as so much instilled and remaining and understanding all of the nutrients that are absolutely essential for human life, whereas we understand very clearly for the animals that we raise we know their requirements and what it takes to optimally feed those animals. We do not necessarily have the same knowledge in people, and so these are sort of where innovation is going to be really key. I see within the next five to ten years to be able to unravel those mysteries, especially as we look to even further elongate life expectancies throughout the world. So innovation at least in our shop is very, very key overall.

Amb. Kenneth Quinn:

Kathy, sustainability, and how does that fit with your broader business vision and model at ADM and how do you see this evolving in the future?

Kathy Pickus:

Thank you for that question, you know I think that when we are talking about some of our most recent achievements as it relates to our sustainability goals in terms of how we impact society through business, it's focused on regenerative ag. This year we reached a year ahead of schedule, the goal of 5 million acres of regenerative ag under management, and that came through support and partnership and it goes back to, how do you look at different partnering organizations that are on the ground with farmers to help enable support and change and how do we create value sustainability? Yes, it's about mitigating risk but more importantly it's about seeing around the corner to what's coming and finding ways to leverage our core competencies as a business to help farmers create value. So we're thinking strategically in partnership with others, NGO's, other commercial partners to really

drive change and fuel this evolution on the farm. So I'd say that helps us not only as a business, but it helps our partners most importantly the farmers.

Amb. Kenneth Quinn:

Valerie, in my diplomatic career and also my time with Governor Robert Ray I've been at scenes of some of the most desperate situations. I've been to Gaza, I was actually shot at in Gaza, but they didn't hit. And now terrible human suffering there, and the World Food Programme is always there. I remember being with Governor Ray when we saw the victims of Cambodian genocide and that. Having heard all of this you have a few final thoughts about looking ahead and what WFP needs to have and how to respond because we're facing this challenge of feeding ten billion people by the year 2050 and hopefully we'll produce enough food to do that, but WFP is still gonna be needed I think and still on the front lines

Valerie Guarnieri:

Yeah yeah mean we'd like to be putting ourselves out of business. Unfortunately business is booming from a needs perspective, but the resources aren't always there to be able to deliver. And we are always present, directly or through the vast network of partnerships; international and local, nongovernmental organizations, other UN agencies who are working on the ground serving people, making sure that they get the food that they need, but also that they're investing in their future ability to feed themselves. And making sure they get the water, the health, the other pieces of the pie that are so critical for saving lives. I think the private sector is just key on this. We're seeing a situation where the public sector, public funding is stepping back, private sector, private individuals need to step up and step into that space. We know that there are solutions that are already tried and true that can be taken to scale, the private sector can be key in doing that. And there's more innovations, more ways in which we can be better and more efficient with our work and the private sector is key to that. It's the right thing to do, but it's also the smart thing to do. What is the better stress test for the work of the private sector than the context in which we're working, and how better to motivate and engage your staff and your colleagues than to really be engaging them in an effort to solve world hunger. There's plenty of food in the world, the challenge is ensuring that everybody gets the right nutritious food every single day to eat. This is a problem that we can solve, and the private sector is key to that.

Amb. Kenneth Quinn:

So to wrap up I wanna give each panelist a chance for one sentence, or one long sentence. Still have a minute on there, but what's your call to action? What's the one thing so the microphone's fine. What's the one thing that you wanna let everyone know as we conclude okay?

Jason Brantley:

So stay curious about the transformative capabilities of technology. We walk past a lot of things every day and don't realize that it could be applied in an emerging farming or small holder food system, and a great example is like Hello Tractor and Jehiel Oliver. When you engage with them and how they take things that people walked by for a decade and they're really making a difference in farmers' lives. Stay curious about what technology can do when engaged.

Amb. Kenneth Quinn:

I'm gonna skip over you again but I'll come back to you though don't worry, Chris.

Chris Nelson:

You know what in my mind what we're finding is of our workforce people that are coming to work for us, they're desperately seeking some sort of larger value that comes out of work than just the things that we do every day. Partnering with an NGO and such an organization as World Food Programme, truly puts people and allows them to understand that their work not only is important for all the commercial partners that we deal with, but really for humanity in general. And so I urge the NGOs that are here to actively seek out the private sector as a possible partner.

Kathy Pickus:

Yeah and I'm gonna double down on partnerships. I really feel that if we can drive this collective action and Valerie, what you said about the coalition of the willing, to drive market based strategies to give access to markets to some of these opportunities we can drive change at scale.

Valerie Guarnieri:

Just be engaged! I mean it's by making a contribution, whether it's by bringing your ideas and your expertise, whether it's by mobilizing your workforce and the capabilities of your companies to be engaged., This is a problem that we can solve but it's gonna require us working together.

Amb. Kenneth Quinn:

So stay curious, be curious, be engaged, find partners. I want to throw in a quote from Norman Borlaug who would remind everyone that food and innovation and ideas all travel down roads and as Africa is gonna have another billion people Norman Borlaug said, “If you want to feed Africa build roads.” So thank you, please join me in thanking our panelists here. I want to note we finished 30 seconds ahead of time, which means I'm not in Mashal Hussein's dog house and in trouble, I can't afford to be in trouble with her. But thank you again so much for a great and engaging conversation. Thank you, thank you.