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Dole, McGovern named 2008 World Food Prize Laureates

Success of their school-feeding program has enhanced nutrition and education for millions of children

(WASHINGTON, D.C., USA) – Former U.S. Senators **Robert Dole** and **George McGovern** were named winners of the \$250,000 World Food Prize for their collaborative leadership in encouraging a global commitment to school feeding, which has enhanced school attendance and nutrition for millions of the world’s poorest children, especially girls.

Dole and McGovern were announced as the 2008 Laureates by **Ambassador Kenneth M. Quinn**, president of the World Food Prize Foundation, at a ceremony at the U.S. State Department on June 13 that also featured Deputy Secretary of State **John Negroponte**, U.S. Secretary of Agriculture **Ed Schafer** and Under Secretary for Economic, Energy and Agricultural Affairs **Reuben Jeffery III**.

The McGovern-Dole international school-feeding program was established in the United States in 2000 and has gone on to provide meals to feed more than 22 million children in 41 countries and boost school attendance by an estimated 14 percent overall, and by 17 percent for girls. The success of the program has led to dramatically increased international support for the expansion of school-feeding operations in developing countries around the world. As one example, the UN World Food Program’s school-feeding operations have nearly doubled since 2001; in 2006 alone, it fed more than 20 million children in 74 countries.

“Senators McGovern and Dole are tireless champions in the battle against hunger, and are an enormous inspiration,” said **Josette Sheeran**, Executive Director of the World Food Program. “They have given millions of children a chance to dream - and to live healthy lives - through school feeding.”

In the late 1990s, McGovern and Dole worked with then-President Bill Clinton to establish a pilot program to provide poor children throughout Africa, Asia, Latin America and Eastern Europe with school meals. A two-year pilot program, the Global Food for Education Initiative, was established in 2000. Based on the success of the pilot, in 2002 Congress passed and President George W. Bush signed into law the George McGovern-Robert Dole International Food for Education and Child Nutrition Program (known as the McGovern-Dole Program).

“Senator McGovern and Senator Dole worked across party lines toward a common goal to eradicate hunger,” Quinn said. “By reviving and strengthening global school feeding, nutrition and education programs, they have transformed countless lives around the globe.”

The McGovern-Dole Program has spurred increased commitments from donor countries for school feeding and has renewed support from development leaders. The G8 and the New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD) have listed school feeding as a specific intervention in their action plans for poverty alleviation, and the UN Millennium Project included school feeding as one of its 10 key recommendations for achieving the Millennium Development Goals by 2015.

Because hungry children have difficulty learning, the McGovern-Dole Program has had a remarkable educational impact. In addition to increasing school enrollment, school-feeding programs have been shown to improve cognition and overall academic performance and overcome gender inequalities in literacy and access to education. While young girls in developing countries are often kept out of school to work in the home, they are much more likely to be allowed – even encouraged – to enroll in schools with feeding programs.

“The McGovern-Dole program is a great source of pride for USDA and a remarkable example of American generosity and humanitarian leadership,” said Schafer. “I congratulate Senators McGovern and Dole on this well-deserved honor.”

The 2008 World Food Prize will be formally presented to Dole and McGovern at a ceremony at the Iowa State Capitol on October 16. The ceremony will be held as part of the World Food Prize’s Norman E. Borlaug International Symposium, which this year focuses on “Confronting Crisis: Agriculture and Global Development in the Next Fifty Years.” Further information about the Laureate Award Ceremony and Symposium can be found at www.worldfoodprize.org.

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Photographs and additional information can be obtained at www.worldfoodprize.org. Media seeking interviews with Sens. Dole and McGovern may contact Justin Cremer of the World Food Prize Foundation at 515-245-3794 or jcremer@worldfoodprize.org.

The World Food Prize was conceived by Dr. Norman E. Borlaug, recipient of the 1970 Nobel Peace Prize. Since 1986, The World Food Prize has honored outstanding individuals who have made vital contributions to improving the quality, quantity or availability of food throughout the world. Previous Laureates have been recognized from Bangladesh, Brazil, China, Denmark, India, Mexico, Sierra Leone, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, the United Nations and the United States. In 1990, Des Moines businessman and philanthropist John Ruan assumed sponsorship of The Prize and established The World Food Prize Foundation, located in Des Moines, Iowa.