

2017 Laureate

AKINWUMI ADESINA - NIGERIA

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Dr. Akinwumi Ayodeji Adesina, the President of the African Development Bank (AfDB), will be recognized as the 2017 World Food Prize Laureate. Through his roles over the past two decades with the Rockefeller Foundation, at the newly established Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA), and as Minister of Agriculture of Nigeria, Dr. Adesina has been at the forefront of galvanizing political will to transform African agriculture through initiatives to: expand agricultural production, thwart corruption in the Nigerian fertilizer industry, and exponentially increase the availability of credit for smallholder farmers across the African continent.

Drawn to action in terms of policy reform, financial innovation and enhanced agricultural production, Dr. Adesina organized the 2006 Africa Fertilizer Summit, as part of the Rockefeller Foundation; led a major expansion of commercial bank lending to farmers as Vice President of the nascent Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA); and as Minister of Agriculture in Nigeria, introduced the E-Wallet system which broke the back of corrupt elements that had controlled the fertilizer distribution system for 40 years, earning

him the reputation as the "farmer's Minister." His reforms over five years led to dramatic increases in Nigerian food production and farm incomes.

Now as the first person with an agricultural background ever to lead a regional development bank, AfDB President Akinwumi Adesina has become an African Child Nutrition Evangelist, telling everyone who will listen, as well as those who won't, that for Africa to succeed in the 21st century it must promote and enhance the nutritional, educational, and economic opportunities available to the next generation.

A Bold Visionary and Leader for Africa

Dr. Adesina has been heralded as "Africa's Norman Borlaug," and for the past 25 years has passionately spearheaded major policies of comprehensive support for millions of farmers across the continent, including access to financing and credit, access to agricultural technologies such as improved seeds and fertilizers, and investment in agriculture from both the public and private sectors.

2006 African Fertilizer Summit

Adesina came to strongly believe that unless fertilizer use gained traction in African countries on a wide scale, the farmers in those countries would never see an improvement in yields nor in their livelihoods. To that end, in 2006 with President Olusegun Obasanjo of Nigeria, Adesina rallied the world community, including Dr. Norman Borlaug, the Rockefeller Foundation, the heads of IFAD and the African Commission, as well as many other heads of state and leaders of non-governmental organizations to develop workable solutions to Africa's fertilizer crisis.



The African Fertilizer Summit in Abuja, Nigeria, for which he was the lead organizer, was one of the largest high-level meetings in history to focus on Africa's food issues. Before setting out to persuade key African leaders of the need for a fertilizer summit, Adesina had told his wife Grace that he was going into a one-person battle to promote hybrid seeds and fertilizer. In that regard, he managed to galvanize support around the idea of implementing the Green Revolution in Africa.

At the age of 92, the architect of the Green Revolution in Asia and Latin America, Dr. Norman Borlaug, played a central role at the 2006 Summit, challenging the African presidents and leaders during his keynote speech by emphatically declaring, while banging on the lectern, that he wanted to see the Green Revolution take hold in Africa before he died! President Obasanjo, who hosted the gathering, was so moved by Dr. Borlaug's passionate words that he joined him at the podium at the conclusion of the speech, affirming to the audience of more than 1,000 that: "We've been chastised by Norm and, so, we have to move forward and get our agriculture moving."

The government and NGO leaders attending the Africa Fertilizer Summit adopted the "Abuja Declaration on Fertilizer for the African Green Revolution" in which they stated their commitment to "combating poverty and food and nutrition insecurity in Africa, and to direct our attention to key decisions that can move us forward with a view to eradicating hunger by 2030."

Developing the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa

With impetus from the Africa Fertilizer Summit, the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA), was established by the Rockefeller Foundation and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. Former United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan served as Chairman, Dr. Namanga Ngongi as President, and Dr. Adesina as Vice President for Policy and Partnerships.

Adesina played a major role at AGRA in convincing banks to invest in agriculture and working to directly connect farmers to markets - a multi-pronged strategy designed to greatly diminish rural poverty

and create wealth and stability in the agriculture sector. To counter the lack of financial credit available to farmers, he took on the challenge of creating innovative financing systems to ensure that banks would lend to agricultural enterprises, especially smallholder farmers. He convinced the Bank of Uganda to lend to farmers growing bananas, using \$500,000 from Rockefeller's Program Related Investment - also known as Impact Investment - program.

Next, Dr. Adesina developed a partnership with IFAD (International Fund for Agricultural Development) and the Government of Kenya to launch a risk sharing facility with Kenya's largest bank, Equity Bank. The original \$5 million leveraged \$50 million of financing from Equity Bank to tens of thousands of smallholder farmers and the agro-dealers that supported them.

He was then able to scale this to other countries through a \$10 million risk sharing facility (convincing the U.S. Millennium Challenge Corporation and the Kilimo Trust to join AGRA in this partnership), which eventually leveraged \$100 million for loans to farmers in Tanzania, Uganda, Ghana, Mozambique, Benin, Togo and Liberia.

Minister of Agriculture of Nigeria

Adesina's impressive achievement at AGRA led to his appointment in 2011 as the Minister of Agriculture of Nigeria by President Goodluck Jonathan, with the goal of revamping the country's agriculture sector. Under his leadership, Nigeria's food production expanded by 21 million metric tons, and the country attracted \$5.6 billion in private sector investments in agriculture. His application of economic principles and the power of markets on public policy creation resulted in improved livelihoods for millions of rural households.

In 2011, Minister Adesina instituted the Nigerian Incentive Based Risk Sharing for Agricultural Lending (NIRSAL) and negotiated with the Central Bank of Nigeria to use \$350 million to create a facility that would leverage \$3.5 billion from commercial banks into agriculture, the largest ever effort in Africa to get banks to lend to farmers and agribusinesses. Farmers were key beneficiaries of NIRSAL as they received access to lending institutions and improved access to markets to sell their crops, produce and livestock at the best prices possible.



In a major achievement, he took steps to end over 40 years of corruption in the fertilizer distribution system - where an estimated 10 percent of chemicals actually reached farmers - by cutting out the middlemen. He summed up his action by expressing that "if we can't get rid of corruption, we can't uplift agriculture."

Technology provided the means for reaching farmers directly and eliminating the corrupt distributors. With the rapid growth of mobile phones in Africa, opportunities were opened for farmers to receive market and other information directly. Adesina was able to empower them to obtain the inputs they needed through a first-of-its-kind Electronic Wallet ("E-Wallet") system, which provided subsidized electronic vouchers directly to the farmers' mobile phones, vouchers which were then used like cash to purchase fertilizer and seeds directly from agro-dealers. This led to a revolution in access to the basic tools that farmers needed in order to significantly increase the quality and quantity of the crops they planted.

Within the first four years of instituting the E-Wallet system, the lives of 14.5 million farmers and their families had been dramatically transformed. Among these were 2.5 million women farmers who were reached and empowered by having mobile phones. The efficient delivery of inputs to farmers combined with other interventions saw a sharp growth of \$2 billion in five value chains of cassava, rice, sorghum, maize, and cotton. These advances led to Adesina being referred to as the "farmers' Minister."

Adesina led Nigeria's rice revolution by supporting the private sector to grow rice varieties, including NERICA varieties originally bred by Dr. Monty Jones at the West Africa Rice Development Association (for which Jones received the 2004 World Food Prize), that produced high yields, and had exceptional nutritional quality and palatability. Farmers increased production to five to six tons of rice per hectare with the improved varieties. As well, Nigeria built its own rice milling facilities, which added value to the increased yields, and also created jobs.

Adesina's E-Wallet system sparked a Borlaugian "Take It to the Farmer" revolution across Africa. Global financial institutions such as the World Bank, UK Department of International Development, African Development Bank, International Fund for African Development and the European Union began supporting the scaling up of this program into other African counties and beyond.



President of The African Development Bank

As President of the African Development Bank since 2015, Adesina has continued to work with government and business leaders to ensure that, from smallholder farmers to agribusinesses, all can be helped to grow and prosper.

He has declared a major goal to end malnutrition and stunting, an affliction caused by chronic under-nutrition during critical developmental periods early in life that affects over 40 percent of children in Africa. In his words: "The greatest infrastructure to build isn't a road or a rail or a port, as important as those are. The most significant infrastructure is brain power." To that end, he co-founded the African Leaders for Nutrition Panel with John Kufuor, the 2011 World Food Prize Laureate and former President of Ghana.

His vision of an Africa that will one day have the capacity to feed itself is, in Adesina's own words, a "big vision that will require political will and commitment from the private sector." He has set the direction and "put the stakes in the ground" as he constantly reflects on what Norman Borlaug used to say to him using an analogy to football (soccer): "Akin, go score some goals for African Agriculture!"

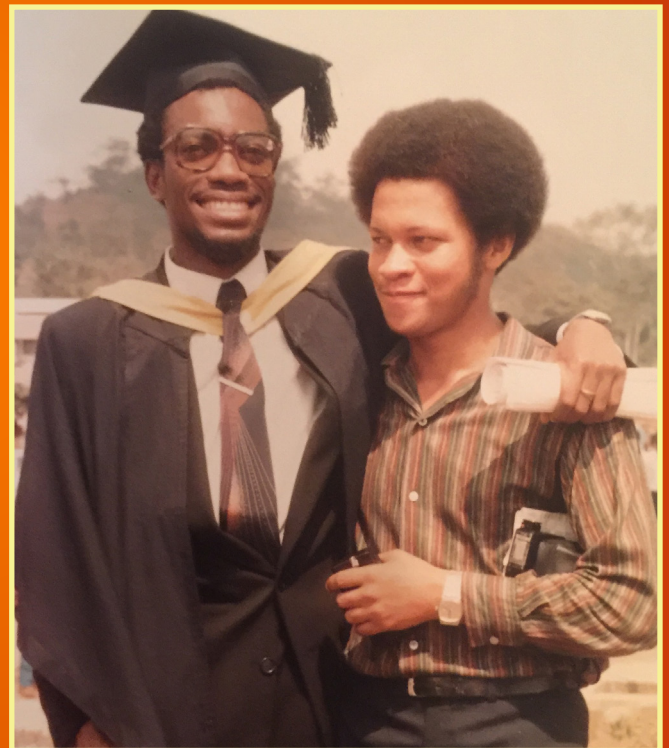
Early Life, Education and Career

Born February 6, 1960 in Ebadam, Nigeria, Akinwumi Ayodeji Adesina was the second of four sons born to Roland Folorunso Adesina and Eunice Adesina. He grew up in a one-room house without electricity or plumbing and slept side-by-side with his brothers on mats on the floor. Although his grandfather and father worked as farm laborers, his father was eventually able to receive some education as a teenager, which led to employment as a civil servant and provided the means to send his own sons to school. Roland told his son that education was a way out of poverty, a "leveler."

Adesina attended a village school rather than a city school because his father thought it was important for him to see the reality of rural poverty experienced by smallholder farmers and their families. This was a defining period for the young Adesina as he learned early in life about the crucial link between agriculture and livelihoods. His father told him, "You never know what you'll become in life. If you rise to a position of influence, then having known poverty first-hand will place you in a better position to help the poor."

He applied to the University of Ife in Nigeria where he studied agricultural economics and completed his Bachelor's of Agriculture degree at the top of his class. Adesina met his wife Grace in a Christian fellowship group at the university, and they married in 1984. The couple has two children, Rotimi and Segun.

Grace's father had served as Minister of Agriculture in Nigeria under President Olusegun Obasanjo. In 1981, when Adesina went to see her father to ask for her hand in marriage, the two of them ended





up having a long conversation about agriculture before Adesina finally got around to the purpose of his visit! Grace's father remained an important mentor to his son-in-law until his death.

Adesina went on to earn both his Master's (1985) and Ph.D. (1988) in Agricultural Economics at Purdue University in West Lafayette, Indiana, USA. The Purdue graduate years were at times financially difficult for Adesina and Grace, but several professors and their families provided friendship, mentorship, and helped sustain them. In 2015, Purdue recognized Adesina with an honorary doctorate.



At the completion of his university studies, Adesina's goal was to return to Africa to help smallholder farmers increase crop production and improve their livelihoods. To that end, he accepted a post-doctoral fellowship at the Rockefeller Foundation in 1988. Rockefeller's Vice President at the time, Joyce Lewinger Mook, who interviewed Adesina for the fellowship, was especially impressed that he delivered his presentation in English and also that his wife Grace, who had been trained in Botany at Ife University, was herself very articulate and a supportive partner to Adesina. He came to consider Mook as his "godmother."



The Rockefeller fellowship started him on an Africa-based ten-year career within the CGIAR system (Consultative Group for International Agricultural Research). He worked first at ICRISAT (International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics) in India for several months before being posted to one of the Institute's facilities in Mali.

From 1990 to 1995, Adesina served as Senior Economist at WARDA (West African Rice Development Association, later known as Africa Rice) in Bouake, Cote d'Ivoire - where Dr. Monty Jones (2004 World Food Prize Laureate) was breeding new rice varieties known as NERICA. Later, as Minister of Agriculture, Adesina brought this "new rice for Africa" to Nigeria, which resulted in significant increases in rice production that helped the country become self-sufficient in rice. He next served as Senior Economist at IITA (International Institute for Tropical Agriculture) in Ibadan, Nigeria from 1995 to 1998.



In 1998, he was recruited to join the Rockefeller Foundation as Senior Agricultural Scientist in New York, and a year later he was appointed the first Director of the Foundation's newly opened Southern Africa Regional Office in Harare, Zimbabwe. In 2002, he became Rockefeller's Associate Director, Food Security.

An early initiative of Adesina's was his development of the concept of agro-dealers. Working with international and local NGOs, he helped design a selection, training, and certification process that converted small village shop owners selling sodas and soap into small agro-dealers who sold seeds, fertilizers, and other inputs, and advised farmers on their proper use. The success of the agro-dealers initiative convinced Adesina that local, private-sector entrepreneurs could play a major role in serving farmers and empowering agricultural development.



Adesina supported local NGOs to take this model to scale, and over a ten-year period, he met with numerous presidents across Africa to convince them to adopt the "agro-dealers" model and advised them on how to structure policy reforms.

At the beginning of his tenure at Rockefeller, he received an inspirational challenge that has remained with him ever since. It came from Dr. Norman Borlaug. As the two of them walked together down Fifth Avenue in New York, discussing plans for Rockefeller's outreach to Africa, Dr. Borlaug asked him if he played soccer. Borlaug then said he hoped Adesina would become a winner in vanquishing the foe of hunger and poverty, telling him to "go score some goals for African Agriculture!"

Other Major Awards

The YARA Prize (2007) for Adesina's leadership in pioneering innovative approaches to improve access to agricultural inputs for African farmers.

The CAST Communication Award (2010) for his role as a distinguished scientist, leader, and communicator who worked passionately for Africa's Green Revolution.

The Forbes Africa Person of the Year Award (2013) for his bold reforms in Nigeria's agriculture sector, which empowered farmers across Nigeria to embrace agriculture as a business.

