

THE WORLD FOOD PRIZE

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REMARKS BY

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AS PREPARED FOR DELIVERY

AT

THE WORLD FOOD PRIZE

2018 LAUREATE ANNOUNCEMENT CEREMONY

JUNE 25, 2018

*U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE - JAMIE L. WHITTEN BUILDING
1400 JEFFERSON DRIVE, S.W. / WASHINGTON, D.C.*

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Under Secretary Bill Northey, thank you for the extremely kind introduction and for your generous words about the World Food Prize and our founder Dr. Norman E. Borlaug. I had the great privilege to work closely with Secretary Northey for the past decade when he served as Secretary of Agriculture of the State of Iowa. Secretary Northey was one of the most popular elected political leaders in Iowa and there was widespread pleasure when he was recently confirmed to the position of Under Secretary of Agriculture.

I had a similar extended opportunity to work closely with Under Secretary Ted McKinney when he held several positions in industry and government in the state of Indiana. I saw firsthand his exceptional leadership on numerous occasions, especially while we were building our youth programs through Purdue University, from which Secretary McKinney is a Distinguished graduate.

May I ask that both of you Under Secretaries convey to Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue our heartfelt appreciation for the privilege we have of holding this Laureate Announcement Ceremony here on the Whitten Patio at the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

I want to add how grateful we are for the very close collaboration we enjoy with several key units within USDA in implementing our Wallace-Carver Fellows program. In this partnership, the World Food Prize Foundation identifies the very top students from our dynamic youth education program that operates across 24 states in America, who then receive paid summer fellowships at USDA. Over the past seven years we have had over 200 of these college-age future leaders in agriculture participate in this program. A number of these Wallace-Carver Fellows are here with us today. Raise your hands so we can see you.

I am especially pleased that three senior USDA officials who are key collaborators with us in this Wallace-Carver Fellowship program, are here today: Dr. Chavonda Jacobs Young, the Administrator of the Agricultural Research Service, Dr. Mary Bohman, the head of the Economic Research Service and my fellow Iowan Dr. Ken Isley, Administrator of the Foreign Agricultural Service.

It is so wonderful to see so many friends, colleagues, representatives of our donors and partners with us today. There are so many of you that I couldn't possibly mention names. As a former State Department Officer, I want to especially recognize Assistant Secretary Manisha Singh, the head of the Economic and Business Affairs Bureau, with whom we worked for 13 years in holding this event. There are four other extremely distinguished Ambassadorial colleagues of mine from the State Department here who I feel compelled to acknowledge. Amb. John Negroponte, Amb. Stapleton Roy, Amb. Tony Hall and Amb. Carol Rodley. I want to say special welcome to the large representation from the diplomatic corps that is here with us this morning. There were 75 individual diplomats registered including 32 ambassadors and chiefs of mission.

One of these diplomats who is newly arrived in the United States asked if I could explain what the World Food Prize is. I thought for a minute and then put it in contemporary context and replied that The World Food Prize is like the World Cup of agriculture. The World Food Prize is a \$250,000 award given to the person who has scored the most goals in terms of reducing hunger and malnutrition around the world.

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The World Food Prize was created in 1986 by America's most honored agricultural scientist Dr. Norman E. Borlaug. Dr. Borlaug grew up on a farm in Iowa and received his education at the University of Minnesota, but got his start in agriculture as an intern at the U.S. Department of Agriculture, exactly like those Wallace-Carver Fellows I just told you about.

At his 95th and last birthday celebration in March 2009, Norm looked back on how his career actually began as a summer employee in the U.S. Forest Service. His grand daughter, Julie Borlaug, who is here today, will recall him recounting his experiences in Idaho and Massachusetts.

Indeed, Norman Borlaug was set to become a full time USDA employee when a problem occurred in Congress regarding the USDA appropriation. His appointment had to be delayed. As Congressman David Young of Iowa who is here with us knows, and Mrs. Barbara Grassley, the wife of Senator Chuck Grassley can confirm, there can be concerns at times about slow action by the Congress. But in this case, it was the Congressional delay that changed the world. Borlaug remained in Minnesota, got a Ph.D. in plant pathology and spent the next two decades working in the poorest parts of Mexico to develop high yielding, disease resistant "Miracle Wheat." He then took his new seeds to the Punjab of India and Pakistan where both countries faced imminent famine. As a result, hundreds of millions were saved from hunger, starvation and certain death. Statues of Borlaug stand today in Mexico, India and in the U.S. Capitol.

For rising to that challenge, Borlaug was called to Oslo in 1970 to receive the Nobel Peace Prize, the first person from agriculture to ever be so recognized, and the first person from USDA to be a Nobel Laureate. In 1986, he created the World Food Prize with the goal that it would one day come to be seen as the equivalent of the Nobel Prize for Food and Agriculture.

Since then 46 individuals have been chosen to be World Food Prize Laureates, four of whom have a USDA connection; Dr. Ray Bushland, Dr. Hank Beachell, Catherine Bertini, and Dr. Ed Knippling, who was a graduate of Iowa State University. It is so marvelous that his son Ed Knippling could be with us today. Ed was Administrator of the Agricultural Research Service and a great collaborator with us. They come from 18 countries and the United Nations, and have been recognized for a vast array of achievements in multiple disciplines. But what they all share in common is that they, like Borlaug, rose to the challenge, they scored goals by increasing the quality, quantity or availability of food in the world, thereby reducing hunger, malnutrition and the loss of life. I am so very pleased that we have two of those past Laureates with us today: Dr. Howarth Bouis of the United States who is here with his wife Cristina. He was honored in 2016 for his achievements in enhancing nutrition through crop biofortification; Howdy, please stand up so we can acknowledge you.

And the second is Dr. Gebisa Ejeta, our 2009 Laureate from Ethiopia and Purdue University, who made an amazing breakthrough in sorghum production impacting millions in Eastern Africa. Gebisa is here on the stage with us because of a very special role he is now playing as the chairman of our Laureate Selection Committee.

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For the first 32 years of our Foundation's existence, there were only two individuals who served as that Committee's leader: Dr. Borlaug himself, and for the last decade, Dr. M.S. Swaminathan of India, the first World Food Prize Laureate. They are two of the most revered leaders in agriculture in the world for their essential role in starting the Green Revolution, the single greatest period of food production and hunger reduction in all human history.

In choosing Dr. Ejeta to succeed those two towering figures, our Council of Advisors was clearly stating its judgement that his intellectual acumen and personal integrity would continue that legacy and build upon it. So, Dr. Ejeta, please stand so we can recognize you for your achievements and for the ongoing critical role you will play as Chair of our Laureate Selection Committee.

I want to acknowledge the presence of two members of our Council of Advisors here today: Peter McPherson, the President of APLU, and former Deputy Secretary of Treasury and the Administrator of USAID, Paul Schickler, the immediate past president of DuPont Pioneer, who with his wonderful wife Claudia, champions our Iowa Youth Institute through their generous financial support.

Now, turning to the business at hand, today, I will announce the names of two individuals who were chosen by Dr. Ejeta and our Selection Committee who will share the 2018 World Food Prize – These are two men who also rose to the challenge. Who, through their individual and complementary global leadership, elevated maternal and child undernutrition as a central issue within the food security and development agenda at national and international levels, with extraordinary results.

One Laureate was a pioneer in food policy research at the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) and the Institute of Development Studies (IDS), who brought the issue of nutrition to the forefront of the global food security agenda. By using both economic and medical research, he convinced development leaders to make child nutrition an urgent priority. The other Laureate, a champion of public health within the United Nations, was directly responsible for leading the global effort to unite 54 countries and one Indian state under the Scaling Up Nutrition Movement. Through this initiative, these countries joined forces to implement evidence-based policies and programs.

Together, our 2018 Laureates' work significantly improved nutrition for mothers and children in the critical first 1,000 days of life – the period from pregnancy to a child's second birthday. For it is during this period that without sufficient nutrition, mental and physical stunting occurs. And as the celebrated author Roger Thurow, who is with us today, has said, "Stunting is a life sentence of underachievement and underperformance."

Our Laureates have inspired efforts by governments and by countless thousands and thousands of others that have collectively reduced the number of stunted children in the world. Those improvements have come in countries around the globe, some of which are represented here today, such as Bangladesh, Nepal, Malawi, Tanzania, -- Kenya and Ghana.

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For their relentless advocacy and leadership, which, between 2012 and 2017, reduced the number of stunted children in the world by 10 million, it is my privilege to announce that the 2018 World Food Prize Laureates are, the Executive Director of the Global Alliance for Improving Nutrition, Dr. Lawrence Haddad of the United Kingdom; and, the first Coordinator of the United Nations Scaling Up Nutrition Initiative, Dr. David Nabarro.

Bill Gates, co-chair of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation said of our Laureates, “Like Dr. Norman Borlaug before them, Drs. Haddad and Nabarro have dedicated their careers to reducing hunger and malnutrition. Their work has deepened our understanding of nutrition’s impact not only on individual health, but on human capital and economic growth – compelling leaders in countries across the world to invest in evidence-based solutions.”

Drs. Haddad and Nabarro will receive the World Food Prize at a ceremony in the Iowa State Capitol building in Des Moines, Iowa, on the evening of October 18, 2018. The event is the centerpiece of our Borlaug Dialogue International Symposium, a three-day event which regularly draws over 1,200 people from 50 countries to discuss cutting-edge issues in global food security.

I want to extend the warmest possible invitation to all of you to come to Des Moines in October for our Laureate Award presentation and Borlaug Dialogue Symposium. Registration opens on July 9, and on that day I want to encourage you to go to www.worldfoodprize.org to sign up and secure your place. Seats will go fast.

Reflecting the achievements of our 2018 Laureates, the theme for our Borlaug Dialogue is “Rise to the Challenge.” Rise to confront the question – whether we can nutritiously and sustainably feed the 9 to 10 billion people who will be on our planet by 2050. With the inspiration of Dr. Norman Borlaug and all of our World Food Prize Laureates, we can meet this greatest challenge in human history.