

THE WORLD FOOD PRIZE
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Confronting Crisis: Agriculture and Global Development in the Next Fifty Years
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SYMPOSIUM KEYNOTE LUNCHEON

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Speaker: Sylvia Mathews Burwell

Ambassador Kenneth Quinn

President - World Food Prize Foundation

I was trying to think exactly how to introduce, and I said, you know, here's a woman who has the single best job in the world – because Bill and Melinda Gates have stepped forward at a crucial moment and have provided the inspiration and the leadership to address what I think will be the critical issue in the world of 2058. Is food going to be, as Norman Borlaug believed, that which unites us and helps countries live at peace – or is it going to be a world that's divided and volatile and violent because of issues of food and water.

Sylvia Mathews Burwell has an amazing background, a graduate of Harvard, a Rhodes Scholar, worked in the Clinton Administration – in all the tough jobs: Deputy Director of OMB and at the White House and the staff of the President and at the Treasury Department with Robert Rubin and now working as the head and architect of the global development of all the Gates Foundation and looking out in the world.

It's a great honor and privilege to have you with us today, so please join me in welcoming Sylvia Mathews Burwell.

SYMPOSIUM KEYNOTE LUNCHEON ADDRESS

Sylvia Burwell

President of Global Development, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation

Good afternoon, and thank you for all your efforts, and that warm introduction, Ambassador Quinn.

There are so many remarkable people in this room today – scientists and seed executives, farmers and philanthropists, entrepreneurs and policy experts. You've come from across the country and around the world to honor two leaders and to confront the complex challenges of agriculture, hunger and poverty.

The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, as you know, is relatively new to agriculture. In fact, it was only two years ago when I was on a learning trip with Bill and Melinda in Nigeria, and we

were learning about different agriculture issues, and we were on a cassava farm, we were looking at different yields and different roots. And a cassava farmer cut a piece of a cassava and handed it to Bill, and as he was putting that towards his mouth, I started to panic. I'm from West Virginia, and cassava is not a staple crop in West Virginia. But I'd read somewhere about possible cyanide poisoning coming from cassava, and as Bill is taking a bite, I'm thinking, oh, my – I may be poisoning Bill Gates. Fortunately, it all worked out. Bill and Melinda don't hold it against me.

We've learned a lot, and we continue to learn. And we learn so much from so many of you in this room. So it's with gratitude, humility and optimism that I come here today to speak.

To begin with, I want to join you in recognizing two great leaders in the fight against world hunger, Senators Bob Dole and George McGovern, the Laureates of the 2008 World Food Prize. I don't think it's a coincidence that both of these men who have dedicated their lives to public service grew up in small farming communities where people depend not just on their own work and the bounty of the land, but often each other, to put food on their own tables.

In this political season and in this battleground state, these two leaders from opposing parties remind us of how much we all have in common and how much we can accomplish when we work across party lines and across sectors.

So on behalf of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, I thank and congratulate Senators Dole and McGovern for their service, their leadership, and their partnership.

I want to say a few words also about Dr. Norman Borlaug and the World Food Prize. Few people in history have done so much for so many people and done it with such unassuming modesty. Instead of basking in the glow of his well-deserved acclaim, Dr. Borlaug has always worked to redirect that spotlight to a cause much greater than any single person, meeting the challenge of world hunger.

This year with nearly a billion people going hungry as we meet, the World Food Prize is more important than ever. So I thank Dr. Borlaug not just for focusing the world's attention on the crisis, but for continuing his lifelong effort to marshal the extraordinary scientific, financial, and political resources that are necessary to meet it.

You're all aware of the terrible toll that the food crisis is taking. After all, you've all been on the frontlines of this perennial battle for years. We all know that all too often where people are hungriest, production is down; and where incomes are lowest, prices are up. But I believe this moment of acute crisis offers us an unprecedented chance to reverse these grim circumstances around the world and that there are several reasons that we should be optimistic.

For the first time in decades, the world has renewed its focus on agricultural productivity for the poor. Recent advances in science and technology are making extraordinary gains possible. And today I see here an energized agricultural community with the expertise, the resources, and the will to spark a second Green Revolution.

So how do we work together to turn this crisis and make it a turning point for us? Individually, the organizations that we all work for are pieces of the puzzle. The challenge is to fit these pieces together and to enlist still more to join us. And that's what I'd like to talk about today.

I'm going to tackle this in three parts. First, I want to talk a little bit about how the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation thinks about its work in development and why agricultural development is central to that effort.

Second, I'm going to highlight a few examples of the innovative and exciting work of our partners around the world today, many of whom are in this room.

And third, I'm going to outline what I hope we can all do individually and collectively to realize our shared vision of a world where the poorest people can feed themselves, work their way up out of poverty, and lead healthy and productive lives.

At the Gates Foundation our work is guided by one simple belief – that all lives, no matter where they're led, have equal value. We believe that, whether someone is born in Dakar or Des Moines, it shouldn't predetermine whether or not they have the ability to lead a healthy and productive life. Of course, this belief is simple to say but much harder to achieve. But our ultimate goal is to reduce the world's greatest inequities so that every person has the opportunity to lead a healthy and productive life.

Initially, this goal led us to focus on our global health efforts and, domestically, on efforts on education and access to information in public libraries. But about two years ago we made a decision to expand our work to encompass global development. In one sense, our focus on development in general, and agriculture specifically, began about 135 miles to the west, in Omaha.

In 2006, Warren Buffet informed Bill and Melinda that he was thinking about giving a considerable amount of his wealth to the foundation. Warren's subsequent gift was at once monumental, humbling, and inspiring. It also led to one of the biggest homework assignments of my entire life.

When Warren Buffet makes an investment, he expects a return. So my team and I embarked on an intense study to find the most effective ways to make our belief a reality – that every person should have an opportunity to lead a healthy and productive life.

We started with the following mission: To increase opportunity for people in developing countries to lift themselves out of hunger and poverty. This is the purpose of the Global Development Program, which I lead.

We also started with a few key principles. First, we recognize that philanthropy plays an important but limited role. We can take risks, move quickly, and catalyze change. But large-scale, lasting change is ultimately driven and sustained by markets and governments. Our work, therefore, must strengthen or complement these forces, but not compete or replace them.

Second, we focus our work on benefiting individuals. There are, of course, many effective ways to approach and quantify development. Individual people are the lens through which we view and measure our success at the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.

Third, we believe that we can have the greatest impact by focusing on a few key issues for the long term. In choosing our areas of focus, we asked ourselves the following questions:

What issues affect the most people but receive the least attention and resources?

Second, what are the greatest opportunities to help large numbers of people lift themselves out of hunger and poverty?

And finally, what can we have impact on that is scalable and sustainable over time?

Time and again, the answer was agriculture. History has shown us that almost no country has managed a rapid rise from poverty without increasing its agricultural productivity. Today the majority of the more than one billion people living on less than a dollar a day rely on agriculture for both their food and their incomes. And in sub-Saharan Africa, agriculture represents two-thirds of employment and about one-third of GDP.

Clearly, agriculture and prosperity must grow together. We have already seen the alternative. Over the past 25 years, agricultural productivity in sub-Saharan Africa has stagnated, even as the rest of the world has seen steady and significant gains. The stagnation has come at a tremendous cost.

In the 1960s Africa was a net food exporter. It now is a net food importer. At the same time, there has been a sharp drop in official development assistance for agriculture. In 1980 about 16 percent of foreign assistance went towards agriculture. Twenty-five years later, that number is 4 percent. And despite a commitment by African countries to commit 10 percent of their budget towards agriculture, the average number is about 4 percent.

While the need is clear, the opportunity is also clear. Thanks to the work of the people in this room and many more around the world, we know that it's possible to dramatically improve agricultural productivity. The Green Revolution in Latin America and much of Asia doubled the amount of food produced, saved hundreds of millions of lives, and laid the groundwork for broader development for many countries. While there were some unanticipated negative consequences, the Green Revolution showed that progress can be made at a large scale and offered lessons and inspiration for the future.

As I mentioned, agricultural development is the largest part of our global development portfolio at the foundation. By the end of this year, the Global Development Program will have committed \$1.5 billion; of that, \$900 million is committed to agriculture. We're in this for the long haul.

I'd like to highlight a few points about our approach to our giving in agriculture. Our approach in agriculture begins and ends with the small farmer. Everything we do is focused on him – or more likely, her. We're working with partners to cultivate opportunities for millions of small farmers to boost their yields, increase their incomes, and improve their lives.

The story of one small farmer's success of growing, harvesting, and selling goods is bound up in the larger story of agriculture. Success requires not only quality seeds and healthy soils but also good information, access to markets, and supportive policies. That's why we're pursuing improvements across the entire length of the value chain – from developing quality seeds and improving farm-management practices, to bringing crops to market and funding research for the future.

And in each of these areas we're focused intently on women. With the help of Catherine Bertini, the 2003 World Food Prize Laureate, who is also a senior fellow at the foundation for agriculture, we developed a comprehensive strategy to address gender in our agriculture work. This is not about a political agenda. It's about relentless focus on results.

We're convinced that agricultural development is more effective when it directly addresses the needs of women who in so many ways manage the food supply in the developing world. When these women are neglected or treated as an afterthought, agricultural programs don't get the results that they can achieve.

How will we know if we and our partners are achieving the results we seek? We'll know when we see hard data on the farmers we target, indicating steady increases in incomes as well as a decrease in the number of underweight children, and improvements in other basic health measures. These are some of the metrics that we use measuring our progress.

But our vision for success goes beyond numbers on a spreadsheet. Our broader vision is to help create a set of opportunities to give small farmers the opportunities not only to meet their families' basic needs, but also to go beyond that so they can raise them and their families out of poverty permanently.

When a single farmer achieves this independence, it's a great success story. When it happens to an entire community, it's development. That's our long-term vision, and I hope it resonates with you – because we can't accomplish what we want to achieve without partners.

There's a saying that we like to take to heart at the foundation: *If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together.* And it is our unequivocal goal to go far together.

It's going to take strong, effective partnerships, partnerships like those that brought us the Green Revolution, and new and innovative partnerships that now more closely link the public and private sectors. We need partnerships between researchers in the developed and developing worlds so the world's newest discoveries can benefit those growing the world's oldest crops. And we need all governments, big and small, to start thinking about problems in new ways.

At the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation we know that these kinds of partnerships are what will hopefully make us successful.

The first partnership I want to highlight is also our largest – AGRA, the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa. AGRA brings together private funders, like the Rockefeller Foundation, as well as public funders, like UK's Department for International Development, and African governments, all under one shared vision, which is revitalizing African agriculture. AGRA is African-based and African-led. It's chaired by former U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan; and its president, Namanga Ngongi, who is a longtime World Food Prize attender and also a palm-oil farmer himself, is here today.

Its first initiative, launched in 2006, aims to introduce more than 1,000 new varieties of African staple crops. These new, stronger varieties will be researched, developed, and distributed by African institutions that are being created or strengthened, and they're projected to help alleviate poverty and hunger for up to 30 to 40 million people.

Another recent partnership we are excited about is our collaboration with the Howard G. Buffet Foundation and Josette Sheeran and her team at the World Food Programme on an initiative called Purchase for Progress, or P4P. The innovative partnership has real potential to revolutionize the way the World Food Programme buys food in the developing world, giving hundreds of thousands of small farmers access to reliable markets and the opportunity to sell their crops at competitive prices. P4P is a true win/win opportunity that allows the World Food Programme to help those who have little or no food, while supporting local farmers who have little or no access to markets to sell their crops.

The last partnership I want to highlight is one that is near and dear to Dr. Borlaug. Earlier this year we formed a partnership with Cornell University to combat wheat rust, a disease that threatens approximately 80 percent of African and Asian wheat varieties. Cornell in turn is partnering with 15 top-flight institutions from around the world. Together they will mobilize the advocacy, research, and support needed to prevent a plague of devastating proportions. All of us involved in the project were inspired to see Dr. Borlaug make the trip to Mexico, where his career in breeding began, to help kick off this new endeavor. It was his voice that sounded the alarm, so it was only appropriate that he was there to announce this truly global response.

These are just a few of the agriculture partnerships that we're working towards to create sustainable, scalable, systemic change. In the spirit of that collaboration and impact, I want to issue four challenges that I hope we can all unite our efforts behind.

First, let's invest in agriculture. If donor governments follow through on their pledges to increase aid and reprioritize agricultural development; if developing country governments follow through on their commitments to increase the spending on agriculture; and if nonprofits expand upon smart and catalytic investments – if all those things happen, then we will have the resources we need to reduce hunger and poverty on a large scale.

Second, let's also make sure these investments are used as effectively as possible. Improving the effectiveness of these investments is just as important as increasing them. That means, for example, ensuring that funding for crop research flows to the crops that mean the most for those living in poverty. It means investing in local capacity and efforts so that leaders like Monty Jones, the 2004 World Food Prize Laureate and an AGRA board member, can do their best work. It means making sure that donor priorities align with the priorities of their developing-country partners.

Third, to accomplish this coordination, let's share data and results more freely and more openly. This is challenging but critical. One small way the Gates Foundation is trying to do this is by piloting a new feature on our website that tracks the progress and lessons – real-time and real data – on a set of our agricultural development grants. Perhaps the World Food Prize could be the place where people gather each year to share concretely each year what they've accomplished, what went well, and what didn't work. (I didn't preview that before I said that.)

Fourth, let's put small farmers front and center. For scientists in the room, can you partner with researchers in the developing world, so your work is even more effective for small farmers? For grant-makers, can you involve farmers in the programs as you design them? For business leaders, can you reach small farmers with agricultural investments that deliver both financial and social returns? For everyone, can you ensure that all of your efforts consider the importance of women farmers?

Together we can meet these challenges. The measure of our success will be the degree to which we can enable small farmers everywhere to take what we all take for granted – feed our families.

I started today by telling you about our belief that all lives have equal value. It can be hard to process what that means, so I wanted to end by telling you how I keep focused on that every day.

I have a picture in my office of a little Senegalese girl named Ndeye Ndiaye. She was 18 months old when the picture was taken; she's much older now. And she's contently sitting in a little blue bucket. And this is a picture that I distribute to every person who comes on the Global Development team, and I tell them, "She's your boss." This little girl now has 125 people working for her.

And every action we take should be for her benefit and the benefit of every person for whom the idea that all lives have equal value still rings false. Because ultimately what we do is not about yields, returns, or markets. It's about increasing opportunities for hundreds of millions of people to build healthy, productive lives.

Thank you for all you do, and I look forward to working with you. Thank you.

QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION

Ambassador Kenneth Quinn

I think we have time for a couple of questions. There are microphones here and over here if anybody wants to put up your hand. Sylvia, that was such an inspiring address, and the work that you're doing is so magnificent. And there have been some wonderful remarks made from this podium and at this forum, but this is right at the very top.

And I want to say, you've issued some challenges, and as the president of the foundation, I work for the chairman and the Council of Advisors who are all down here. And usually to do anything I have to go and ask their permission, but we accept your challenge to have the World Food Prize be the place where people come and gather each year to share information. Thank you for that, and we're prepared to welcome you back – right?

Quinn There we have a question.

Question Andy Revkin, *New York Times*. I wanted to find out – do you feel that there are orphan crops, just like there are orphan drugs? Is there anything that corporate America, you know, that big ag can do more on to help facilitate some of the advancements you're looking for?

Burwell The concept of orphan crops, I think, is a very real one when you're working in the developing world, because a number of the staple crops are not crops that are invested

here in the developing world. And so I think the answer to that question is yes. But we need to think about those crops.

And we don't actually think of them as orphan crops because they're the priority crops that we work on in the countries we work in. But from the perspective of investments in research and development, I think that's true. And that's one of the things that we're working hard with partners to help get focus on, to increase that research and development funding, both in the developed world and in the developing world.

Because one important distinction in our health work and our agriculture work about a drug development and agricultural development and R&D is the fact that – it is true, not completely but basically true, if you develop a polio vaccine or a malaria vaccine or an AIDS vaccine, even if it's developed in the developed world, it can be used reasonably, reasonably simply in the developing world. For agriculture we have to have partnership, because the breeding that is occurring in the developed world, it must be bred for different conditions.

And so the answer to the question is – I think both need to occur, large companies in the developed world need to do some of that initial R&D, but they need to do it in partnership with building the R&D capabilities in the developing world.

And an example of that is a partnership we're doing right now with an African organization called the AATF where we are working on a drought-resistant gene. And they are then in turn partnering with another corporate entity; Monsanto, in this case.

And so we agree with the premise of your question, which is more research and development needs to go to the crops of the developing world, both here in the developed world and building those teams of people and researchers, many of whom are sitting around these tables as I look, that we know, and making sure that these people are cloned to the tune of a hundred, at least, for each individual. That's not part of our global health effort, though I'm pushing our health person on this issue. I'm like, if we could just clone some of these researchers, it would make our work much easier.

Question Hi, Sylvia; Pat Binns with Washington State University. I wanted to ask you your view on the role of rural infrastructures, particularly those that focus on the production of organic fertilizers and energy as agricultural inputs. And is there a role for the foundation's interventions to stimulate those kinds of, what I call, "village-to-valley"-scale infrastructures?

Burwell So I think the question of infrastructure that you touched upon sort of works across a whole number of issues. You mentioned specifically with regard to soil health, but I think we also think that when we're considering infrastructure, we also have to consider the roads that allow the products and increased productivity to do true income increases, and also the issues around water, since agriculture uses so much. So those are all areas where we are thinking about – what are the most effective ways for us to play a role?

And the question is, as a philanthropy, what is the appropriate role? For instance, the question of roads and infrastructure, while it's essential, is not necessarily something that we think we're best capable to do, those long-term investments; that those are probably better being government-based or partnerships. Like we recently did a partnership with the Millennium Challenge Corporation, which is part of the U.S. government's efforts in agriculture. And they're going to look to fund roads and infrastructure in some of the places where the Alliance for the Green Revolution in Africa will be working.

So the question of how we work on each of those issues that are infrastructure issues, I think, varies on what's the problem and who are the other players. As I said, we don't ever want to substitute, compete, or do anything...what we try and do is be complementary. In the area of soils, you may be familiar with – we have funded a large effort at the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa in integrated soil-health management.

And when we first started thinking about the issues, to be honest, we talked about a fertilizer initiative; and we very quickly – we're learning, but we learn quickly – that that was not the approach that we should be thinking about in terms of long-term, sustainable change. And so that effort (and that is where much of our effort on the key issue you raised is focused) is with our partner, the Alliance for Green Revolution in Africa on integrated soil-health management.

Question Thank you. Margaret Catley-Carlson, Council of Advisors. Thank you for a very articulate and clearly enunciated statement of your vision and what you'd like to accomplish. When you started talking a couple of years ago about giving pride of privilege, a privileged place, to the development of the seeds and the development of the new agricultural products that your research had shown that Africa could certainly use, a number of us were somewhat nonplussed because there are good examples – of Quality Protein Maize, of NERICA – of a number of products that are there, and the problem seemed to be at least as much dissemination and outreach to farm communities.

I'd be fascinated to hear you reflect on how you see the necessary linkage and pathways, because there are an awful lot of good products that exist that could have been useful in the last decades – a lot of them created by people who are in this room. And it is the absence of the social and the institutional infrastructure, whether you call them extension services, farm-help, groups that can reach out to women. But tell me about your – tell us about your reflections on that, because that is the missing link. And how do you see putting some linkage factors in that missing link. Thank you.

Burwell We agree with you wholeheartedly that there are many things that actually do exist that could promote dramatic change. And one of the hardest pieces to crack in this question of increasing farmer productivity at large scale has to do with that actual, the farmer productivity piece, the extension piece. And so when I said that we worked across the value chain, we do think about seeds and seed production, but we also think about farmer productivity. And we also think about market access.

And a mistake that we originally made, that Raj and I made – Raj will be very pleased that I'm up here talking about our mistakes – was we actually thought that we could do our work sequentially with regard to market access. And that meant that we would do our work in the other parts of the value chain and do that last, that we would sequence the work. We stopped that in six months.

Now we do it all concurrently, because the market-access piece, which is creating the markets, whether it's – we have a partnership on cotton, we have a partnership on coffee, we have partnerships that are creating the demand pool. But at the same time they're creating the demand pool, just like the P4P thing I mentioned, they are doing those other steps – like extension, as well as teaching the farmers, what's the standard of quality for coffee you're going to export, or what types of fertilizers are acceptable or not in terms of different types of use. So we've changed in terms and evolved, that we try and do it across the board.

And so in addition to that, though, we invest directly. One of the first investments at the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa was about a program for African seed systems – systems, not the seeds. And so, so much money has already gone into agro-dealers to do that promotion, to think about ways that you can think about extension.

Having said all that, we're focused on it; we agree with you. I wouldn't be, I think, forthright if I didn't say it's the hardest part. And so we are putting time, energy, effort, money, talking to partners. I think Mercy is here, Mercy Karanja, one of our staff members. I think she is – there is Mercy right there, who has joined us from Africa and is a person who has had great on-the-ground expertise and leadership in this space.

And so not only are we thinking and talking, we are hiring the people with this expertise, because you have hit on what is one of the hardest things. And so we're very focused on it and investing in it, and those are some examples of how. But it is tough.