



World Food Prize Highlights Need To Combat Hunger, Malnutrition, Poverty

The 25th annual World Food Prize Symposium takes place in Des Moines this week, as experts in food and ag policy from around the globe gather to discuss issues and ideas to feed the world's hungry.

Compiled by staff

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The awarding of the World Food Prize and the World Food Prize Symposium will take place this week in Des Moines, Iowa. This is the 25th anniversary of the event, which attracts policy makers from around the world. Over 1,000 people will attend the three day conference which begins Wednesday October 12.

Speakers and panel discussions will look at various aspects of what needs to be done to step up efforts to combat hunger, malnutrition, and poverty. The award ceremony will take place Thursday evening in the Iowa State Capitol. The annual awarding of the prize recognizes policymakers and leaders who have invested in their countries' agricultural futures. This year's award is being given to two former heads of state to highlight the importance of transformational leadership in effecting positive change and improving people's lives.

This year's prize will be shared by two people, both former presidents

The World Food Prize, awarded each year since 1994 and sponsored by the late Des Moines businessman and philanthropist John Ruan, recognizes the achievements of individuals who have advanced human development by improving the quality, quantity, or availability of food in the world, thereby helping to boost global food security. This year, the prize will be awarded to John Agyekum Kufuor, the former president of Ghana, and Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, the former president of Brazil, for their outstanding achievements in reducing hunger in their countries. The ceremony will take place during the Borlaug International Symposium, which is the official name. World Food Prize officials commonly refer to the symposium as the "Borlaug Dialogue."

"As the global population is expected to hit 7 billion by the end of this month, it is increasingly important that food security become a higher priority on country agendas," says Engelman. "Leaders like Kufuor and da Silva show us that political will and government action can reduce hunger. The opportunities to do so around the world are immense."

Important to acknowledge there are still more than 1 billion hungry people in the world

"It is important to acknowledge such high-level leadership in agriculture at a time when there are still more than 1 billion hungry people in the world, and when food prices are high and increasingly volatile," says Danielle Nierenberg, director of Worldwatch's Nourishing the Planet project (www.NourishingthePlanet.org).

"Agriculture is not often a top priority for policymakers—in Africa, only seven nations invest 10% or more of their national budgets in the sector. Now, more than ever, it is essential for policymakers to support sustainable agricultural innovations in order to improve food security." Nierenberg notes that continued neglect from governments is putting greater strain on farmers, especially as they confront the risks of climate change and increasing water scarcity.

World Food Prize recipients have made considerable contributions to their countries' ag sectors

Both of this year's World Food Prize recipients have made considerable contributions to their countries' ag sectors. Under former Ghanaian President Kufuor's tenure, both the share of people suffering from hunger and the share of people living on less than \$1 dollar a day were halved. Economic reforms strengthened public investment in food and agriculture, which was a major factor behind the quadrupling of the country's gross domestic product (GDP) between 2003 and 2008. Because 60% of Ghana's population depends directly on agriculture, the sector is critical for the country's economic development.

In addition to the economic reforms, Ghana's Agricultural Extension Service helped alleviate hunger and poverty by educating farmers and ultimately doubling cocoa production between 2002 and 2005. And the country's School Feeding Program, which began in 2005, ensures that school children receive one nutritiously and locally produced meal every day. The program has transformed domestic agriculture by supporting irrigation, improving seeds and crop diversification, making tractors more affordable for farmers, and building feed roads, silos, and cold stores for horticultural crops.

In Brazil, among the major goals of former President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva's presidency were alleviating poverty, improving educational opportunities for children, providing greater inclusion of the poor in society, and ensuring that "every Brazilian has food to eat three times a day." The government implemented policies and actions known as the "Zero Hunger Programs" to provide cash aid to poor families (guaranteeing a minimum income and enabling access to basic goods and services); to distribute food to poor families through community restaurants, assisted-living facilities, day-care centers, and related organizations; and to provide nutritious meals to children in public schools. As a result, the number of hungry people in Brazil was halved, and the share of Brazilians living in extreme poverty decreased from 12% in 2003 to 4.8% in 2009.

Around the world many of today's investments in agriculture need to be scaled-up

Not just in Ghana and Brazil, but around the world, policymakers, farmers, activists, and other leaders are investing in agricultural innovations to reduce hunger and alleviate poverty—although many of these efforts need to be scaled up. During 2010-11, researchers from Worldwatch's Nourishing the Planet project traveled to 25 countries in sub-Saharan Africa and uncovered a rich and diverse treasure trove of innovations from farmers' groups, private voluntary organizations, universities, and even agribusiness companies. Their findings were published in the Institute's flagship report, *State of the World 2011: Innovations that Nourish the Planet*.

In Uganda, for example, Project DISC (Developing Innovations in School Cultivation) is teaching students how to grow, cook, and eat native vegetables, including spiderwike and amaranth. Not only are the students learning how to cook and provide for themselves, but the classes are giving them a reason to stay in rural areas and become farmers, instead of migrating to the cities. In other countries, including Niger, Kenya, Zambia, and Zimbabwe, farmers are learning how to increase their harvests and get more "crop per drop." In Benin, the Solar Electric Light Fund (SELF) has introduced solar-powered drip irrigation that is improving nutrition and raising incomes for farmers. After one year of implementing the innovation, villagers were eating three to five servings of vegetables a day, and children were going to school instead of spending time carrying water to the fields.

Nourishing the Planet praises the leaders and policymakers—including former presidents Kufuor and da Silva—who have invested in agriculture and helped to reduce hunger and poverty in their countries. But with some 1 billion hungry people remaining in the world, much greater investment and policy support is needed to boost agriculture and improve global food security, says Engelman.

U.S. government officials traveling to 2011 World Food Prize event

USAID Feed the Future Deputy Coordinator Tjada McKenna will travel to Des Moines, Iowa, during the week of October 10, 2011 to participate in events surrounding the World Food Prize (WFP) and Borlaug Dialogue international symposium. She'll accompany U.S. Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack, Assistant Secretary of State for Economic, Energy and Business Affairs Jose Fernandez and Acting Special Representative for Global Food Security Jonathan Shrier.

This year marks the 25th anniversary for the prize, which recognizes the outstanding achievements of individuals who have advanced human development by improving the quality, quantity or availability of food in the world. Former President of Ghana, H.E. John Agyekum Kufuor, and the former President of Brazil, H.E. Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, will be honored for their visionary leadership in creating and implementing policies targeting the alleviation of hunger and poverty in their countries. The award was initially announced in June by U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton and will be awarded in a ceremony on October 13th in the Iowa State Capitol. The WFP Foundation's prize aims to draw attention to the critical issues of hunger and food security, and to highlight progress and solutions toward ending hunger.

The theme of this year's symposium, named after WFP founder Dr. Norman Borlaug, is "The Next Generation: Confronting the Hunger Challenges of Tomorrow." The event will be held in Des Moines from October 12-14 and will draw more than 1,000 international leaders to discuss solutions for improving agricultural development and production in the midst of challenges posed by political volatility, climate change, population growth and other factors.

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