



## The Borlaug Blog

# Africa's Norman Borlaug: Uplifting Millions Out of Poverty

[Main Page](#) | [How Receiving the World Food Prize Had an Impact on My Work](#) ▶

**By Ambassador Kenneth Quinn**  
**President, World Food Prize Foundation**

In launching our new Borlaug Blog series, I am pleased to call attention to our founder **Dr. Norman E. Borlaug**, and our newest World Food Prize Laureate, an individual who is leading efforts to fulfill one of Dr. Borlaug's most heartfelt goals--bringing the Green Revolution to Africa.

After receiving the Nobel Peace Prize in 1970, as Father of the Green Revolution, Dr. Norman Borlaug dreamed of there being a prize that could inspire the breakthrough achievements that would be needed to feed the burgeoning world population. In 1986, he created the **World Food Prize** with the hope it would one day come to be seen as the "Nobel Prize of food and agriculture."



Amb. Ken Quinn

In the thirty years following his establishing the World Food Prize, 45 individuals have been honored as Laureates for their breakthrough achievements increasing the quality, quantity and availability of food.

Today, in a stirring ceremony at the U.S. Department of Agriculture, with U.S. Agriculture Secretary Sonny Perdue, it was my honor to announce that the 46th World Food Prize Laureate is **Dr. Akinwumi Adesina of Nigeria**, the President of the African Development Bank. Four of his fellow Laureates were at the event, including: 2001 Laureate Dr. Per Pinstруп-Andersen of Denmark; Dr. Gebisa Ejeta of Ethiopia, the 2009 recipient; and Dr. Jan Low and Howdy Bouis, both of the United States, who jointly received the Prize in 2016.

With Norman Borlaug leading the way over those three decades, these World Food Prize Laureates have spearheaded the single greatest period of food production and hunger reduction in human history.

From the development of the milk industry in India, to miracle rice perfected at the International Rice Research Institute in the Philippines; from the reform of China's agricultural policies, to eliminating the cattle plague Rinderpest; from the United Nations delivering emergency food shipments around the globe, to eradicating the deadly screwworm infestation in the United States; and from expanding modern irrigation in Israel, Jordan and the Middle East, to discovering and unlocking the incredible potential of biotechnology; the World Food Prize Laureates have been at the forefront of most every significant agricultural breakthrough innovation in this recent period.

As I told the audience filled with ambassadors and diplomats, members of Congress and representatives of major food, agribusinesses and development organizations, Dr. Akinwumi Adesina is being honored as the 2017 World Food Prize Laureate for his lead role over the past decade: in significantly expanding food production in Nigeria; introducing initiatives to exponentially increase the availability of credit for smallholder farmers across the African continent; and galvanizing the political will to transform African agriculture. He passionately pursues major policy, institutional and financing innovations that have brought agricultural technologies to millions across the continent.

Drawn to action, Dr. Adesina: in his role with the Rockefeller Foundation, organized the 2006 Africa Fertilizer Summit; led a major expansion of commercial bank lending to farmers as Vice President of the 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.

Now, as the first person from agriculture to ever lead a regional development bank, his receiving the World Food Prize will give impetus in the coming decade to his profound vision for enhancing nutrition, eliminating childhood stunting, uplifting smallholder farmers, empowering women and inspiring the next generation of young Africans as they confront unprecedented challenges in the 21st century.

For all of these achievements, 2002 World Food Prize Laureate Dr. Pedro Sanchez has referred to Dr. Adesina as "Africa's Norman Borlaug." In looking to the future, our 2017 Laureate has said that having grown up in poverty himself, his life's mission is to "lift up millions of people out of poverty, especially farmers in rural Africa."

In that regard, reflecting Dr. Adesina's goal during one of the most critical moments in Africa's history, the theme for our Borlaug Dialogue is *The Road out of Poverty*.

Dr. Adesina will be presented our \$250,000 prize and Laureate sculpture at a ceremony in the magnificent Iowa State Capitol on the evening of October 19. This event will take place in conjunction with our Borlaug Dialogue International Symposium and our Global Youth Institute. I invite you to attend these events, which will take place October 18-20. Our registration page will go live on July 12 on our website at [www.worldfoodprize.org/register](http://www.worldfoodprize.org/register).

When I completed my tenure as U.S. Ambassador to Cambodia and retired from my diplomatic career at the State Department in 1999, I returned home to Iowa to assume leadership of the World Food Prize. At that time, the array of World Food Prize Laureates did not include any women or any recipients from Africa. I am extremely proud that during the past 18 years the aggregation of Laureates has expanded to include 6 women, and now 6 Africans.

For 30 years, the World Food Prize has worked to build on the legacy of Dr. Norman Borlaug, "the man who saved a billion lives," by recognizing the achievements of individuals who have advanced human development by improving the quality, quantity or availability of food in the world. Our Laureates, our close partners and our staff work tirelessly to alleviate hunger through innovative approaches, and we hope to share their expertise, research and personal stories on our new "Borlaug Blog."

Each week on The Borlaug Blog, we will post a blog featuring stories, research and expert opinion from our Laureates, partners and staff and participants in our youth education programs. It is our goal that this blog series will create a conversation among farmers, government leaders, NGOs, CEOs and scientists around the globe. Our next blog post will feature a retrospective from the very first World Food Prize Laureate, and the person I consider the most revered agricultural scientist alive on our planet today--Dr. M.S. Swaminathan of India.

I hope you will enjoy this series and that it will inspire you to re-double your own efforts to help fulfill Norman Borlaug's vision of eradicating hunger and malnutrition from our planet.

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