

“The World Food Prize Vision”

Remarks By

Ambassador Kenneth M. Quinn

President

of the

World Food Prize Foundation

at the

International Symposium

on

*Science and Technology in Agriculture:
Current and Future*

Chinese Academy of Agricultural Sciences

Beijing

July 10, 2004

On behalf of Nobel Peace Prize Laureate Dr. Norman E. Borlaug, Dr. Robert Havener, and all the members of the World Food Prize Council of Advisors, may I say how honored we are to jointly sponsor and participate in this important conference.

President Zhai Huqu, we are most grateful to you and the Chinese Academy of Agricultural Sciences for all you have done to organize this event. In particular, we wish to note the work of Dr. Liang Qu and Dr. Sun Guoqing of CAAS and our great friend Dr. T.C. Tso for their dedicated efforts to coordinate this conference.

It is particularly appropriate that we have organized this Symposium this year, since 2004 is a year of special significance:

First, because 2004 has been declared the International Year of Rice by the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization. This International Symposium will be a significant contribution to the year long series of events taking place around the world to address this crop which feeds half of all people on our planet and which is of critical importance to China;

Second, because this year another individual from China – Professor Yuan Longping – will receive the World Food Prize. It is most fitting that our discussions will focus on his scientific achievements, which have fed so many in the 20th century, as well as the role of technology and biotechnology in meeting the UN Millennium Development Goals and feeding the world in the 21st century;

Third, it is the year that marks the 90th birthday of Dr. Norman E. Borlaug. During 2004, Dr. Borlaug is being honored around the world. We are grateful to have this opportunity highlight Dr. Borlaug's accomplishments, as well as his long time association with Chinese scientists at this conference.

The World Food Prize was created to be the foremost international award presented to individuals who make exceptional breakthrough achievements in increasing the quality, quantity and availability of food in the world. On two different occasions, the President of the Federal Republic of Germany and the President of the Republic of Mexico have described the World Food Prize as "The Nobel Prize for Food and Agriculture."

This reference is particularly fitting since the inspiration for the creation of the World Food Prize came from Dr. Borlaug not long after he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for his role as "Father of the Green Revolution." At that time, Dr. Borlaug said that he was presented the Prize for Peace because there was no Nobel Prize for food or agriculture. Believing there were many individuals around the world who deserved recognition, just as he had been honored, Dr. Borlaug approached the Nobel Committee with a request that they establish a new Nobel Prize for special achievements in countering hunger, malnutrition and famine. He was told that while his proposal had great merit, the will of Alfred Nobel did not permit the creation of a new Prize.

And so, Dr. Borlaug sat out to establish an entirely new honor, and thus in 1986 the World Food Prize was established. I am very pleased that one of the persons who worked closely with Dr. Borlaug in founding the World

Food Prize – Dr. Robert Havener, a member of our Council of Advisors – is present today and participating in the Symposium.

From its inception, the World Food Prize has been truly an international award. The first Laureate was Dr. M.S. Swaminathan of India. Since then, the \$250,000 Prize has been presented to Laureates from Bangladesh, China, Cuba, Denmark, India, Mexico, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, the United States and the United Nations. I wish to recognize His Excellency He Kang, the former Minister of Agriculture of China who was the 1993 World Food Prize Laureate and Dr. Per Pinstrup-Andersen of Denmark, the 2001 Laureate.

This year we add another Laureate from China. It was my special honor to announce at a special Ceremony in Washington, DC on March 29, that Professor Yuan Longping was selected to share this year's \$250,000 Prize with Dr. Monty Jones of Sierra Leone. President Zhai, we were especially pleased that a delegation from the Chinese Academy of Agricultural Sciences was present at that event, in addition to the U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell, the U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Ann Veneman, and His Excellency Jacques Diouf, the Executive Director of the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization.

The presence of so many senior officials was a great tribute to the achievements of Professor Yuan and Dr. Jones, who were chosen by our Selection Committee for their exceptional, individual accomplishments in developing hybrid rice varieties which are providing more food to feed the rapidly growing world population. Over the past 30 years, Professor Yuan has developed the first hybrid rice seeds, helped create the hybrid rice

seed industry in China, developed even higher yielding “Super-hybrid” varieties, and shared his knowledge with scientists in dozens of countries around the world. His breakthrough achievements revolutionized rice breeding in China, tripling production in a generation.

Dr. Monty Jones is being honored for his achievement in creating new rice for Africa – NERICA – which combines Asian and African rice varieties to produce high yielding, draught resistant seeds which are providing hope to farmers throughout West Africa as they strive to feed millions and millions of people.

Professor Yuan and Dr. Jones will travel to Des Moines, Iowa, where our World Food Prize Foundation is located – on October 13-16 of this year. They will be presented the beautiful World Food Prize Sculpture at a ceremony in the magnificent Iowa State Capitol building. And, they will deliver Laureate lectures at our International Symposium which is entitled “From Asia to Africa: Rice, Biofortification and Enhanced Nutrition.”

The World Food Prize is always presented on or near UN World Food Day (October 16). Our goal is to have the most significant observance of UN World Food Day and the most significant event of the International year of Rice, all at the same time. Last year, we gathered more lifesaving achievement for this ceremony than at any other place around the globe. With Dr. Borlaug, Professor Yuan and Dr. Jones present, I am certain we will have that distinction once again.

I wish to extend a very warm welcome to all of you in attendance here to travel to Des Moines for this special celebration. There are brochures and

registration forms available here at the Symposium. You can also register on line at www.worldfoodprize.org.

The vision of the World Food Prize Foundation is to reduce hunger and famine – in conjunction with the UN Millennium Development Goals, through recognition, inspiration and education.

In presenting the World Food Prize to our Laureates we recognize their achievements and, at the same time, bring to the attention of our most senior policymakers the ongoing problems that must still be addressed.

It is our hope that our Ceremony will also inspire similar great breakthrough achievements in the future by scientists and experts in both the public and private sectors. We want to inspire those doing research funded by the Chinese Ministry of Agriculture and the U.S. Department of Agriculture; or doing work at the institutions like the World Bank supported Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research Centers such as the International Rice Research Institute in the Philippines, headed by Dr. Ron Cantrell who is here with us today; or at organizations such as Sasakawa Africa 2000, headed by Dr. Borlaug and represented at this symposium by Chris Dowswell or the China National Center for Biotechnology Development;

And, we want to inspire great accomplishments in the agri-business sector at companies such as DuPont, represented by Dr. Dean Oestreich, the President of Pioneer Hi-Bred International who is participating in this conference, and at companies like Monsanto, where my good friend Charles Martin worked before assuming his duties as President of the

American Chamber of Commerce in Beijing, and the many other companies represented here.

And, of course, we want to inspire achievements at educational centers such as Cornell and the University of California at Davis, and at marvelous institutions like CAAS, the Chinese Agricultural University headed by Dr. Chen ZhiangLiang and the University of Beijing (Peking University), headed by Xu Zhihong, and Professor Yuan's China National Hybrid Rice Research and Development Center in Changsha, Hunan.

All four of these Chinese research institutions share another distinction. They all host high school students from America who have been selected by Dr. Borlaug to spend eight weeks in China as Borlaug – Ruan Interns sponsored by the World Food Prize Foundation.

These internships are unique and a pioneering concept, which Dr. Borlaug and John Ruan established 10 years ago. The World Food Prize sponsors this program because Dr. Borlaug believes it is essential that we educate the next generation – our young people about the problems they will face in feeding the world they will inherit from us. This year, there are Borlaug – Ruan Interns in Africa, Latin America and the Middle East, as well as in Asia. Four interns are located here in China including one at CAAS.

And, finally, the World Food Prize believes it is important to educate all who will listen about the crucial linkage between reducing poverty, ending hunger, and finding peace. In a world beset with terrorism and political violence, perhaps the most significant weapon the international community possesses in this struggle is the very agricultural research being done here

and at other institutions, to develop new seeds capable of feeding millions and promoting economic development in the poorest and most remote villages – to replace the seeds of instability and violence which can flourish if nothing is done to counter poverty and hunger.

Your Excellency, this conference will address all of these three objectives – it will recognize; it will educate; and, I feel certain, it will inspire.

Thank you for your willingness to join with us in sponsoring this symposium.