

THE WORLD FOOD PRIZE

The World Food Prize Foundation Pays Tribute to 1997 Laureate Perry Adkisson

On behalf of all of the World Food Prize Laureates and our Council of Advisors, the World Food Prize Foundation extends our deepest condolences to Gloria Adkisson and the family, friends and Texas A&M University colleagues of Dr. Perry Adkisson, 1997 World Food Prize Laureate, who passed away on June 25, 2020.

The 1997 World Food Prize jointly honored Dr. Adkisson and his colleague the late Dr. Ray Smith for their combined achievements in finding alternatives to synthetic chemical pesticide use. They demonstrated and popularized Integrated Pest Management (IPM) programs, which use biological controls, cultural and crop management techniques and organic compounds to protect crops while greatly reducing the need for chemical pesticides.

Barbara L. Stinson, president of the World Food Prize Foundation, paid tribute to Dr. Adkisson, stating, "Dr. Adkisson is directly responsible for, in partnership with Dr. Smith, bringing to light the harmful environmental and economic effects of indiscriminate synthetic chemical pesticide use. His contribution to the world of global agriculture and global health was unprecedented in his time. He will be truly missed by everyone at the Foundation."

Dr. Adkisson's vision of effective, safe, and sustainable pest control lives on in the millions of farmers that successfully use the methods he and his colleagues developed and taught. Dr. Adkisson's leadership in advancing IPM systems has given the world's farmers techniques that will continue to sustain the growth of the global food supply for generations to come.

"America and the world lost one of the true giants of agricultural innovation with the passing of Dr. Perry Adkisson," said Amb. Kenneth M. Quinn, President Emeritus of the World Food Prize Foundation. "Along with Dr. Norman Borlaug, Dr. Adkisson was one of the early pioneers of the Green Revolution. It was my privilege to welcome Dr. Adkisson and his wife back to Iowa to take part in our annual events and watched in amazement as he provided inspiration to the next generation of young scientists and students, just as he did during his years leading Texas A&M University."

Upon awarding the Prize to Drs. Adkisson and Smith, Dr. Norman Borlaug stated, "They are true environmental pioneers. They had a vision of an agriculture more in balance with nature."

The list of accolades honoring Dr. Adkisson for his excellent work is impressive, including his 1979 election to the National Academy of Sciences, honorary degrees from the University of Arkansas and Texas A&M, membership in the International Congress of Entomology since 1992,

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and induction into the Texas Heritage Hall of Honor in 1998, honoring those who have significantly contributed to the agricultural heritage of Texas. He has also received the 1980 Alexander von Humboldt Award for outstanding contribution to agriculture and the 1994 Wolf Prize in Agriculture – which, with his receipt of the World Food Prize, made him the first person to be honored with all three of the world’s major prizes in agriculture.

A congratulatory message on the receipt of the Prize from the Global IPM Facility that Dr. Adkisson helped establish read: “The food security of the future in Africa, Asia, Latin America, the Near East, and Oceania relies on the performance and problem solving ability of the farmers, and those abilities are in direct part due to you as champions of their potential to apply science in their fields...IPM began as common sense that faced ecological reality. But to follow that common sense, and to get millions of others to see it as common sense, required commitment, discernment and courage. We are proud to acknowledge that we owe the chance we have to help others implement IPM to your having these qualities in abundance.”

Dr. Perry Adkisson Biography

Dr. Perry Adkisson received the 1997 World Food Prize with Dr. Ray F. Smith for their shared achievement in pioneering the practice of Integrated Pest Management programs by farmers around the world. Since their inception, IPM methods have saved farmers millions of dollars by reducing reliance on chemicals to fight insects, fungi, weeds, and other pests. More, they have improved production rates and the ecological impact of agriculture – making the world’s food supply at once larger, safer, and more stable.

Dr. Adkisson was born in Arkansas on March 11, 1929, on a small cotton and soybean farm. Enrolling in graduate study after serving in the Korean War, he received an M.S. in agronomy from the University of Arkansas and a Ph.D. in entomology from Kansas State University. He was a researcher at the University of Missouri until joining the faculty of Texas A&M University’s entomology department in 1958.

From his initial research on controlling pink bollworm, his interest grew in studying methods to control other cotton pests that had developed resistance to chemical pesticides. He began to see the expense of continuously developing stronger synthetic insecticides and led research into the insects’ natural enemies and resistant varieties of cotton. His new integrated system proved highly effective in a tobacco budworm epidemic in Texas and Mexico where chemicals were failing. As department chair from 1967 to 1978, Dr. Adkisson devoted further Texas A&M

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resources to exploring IPM programs for sorghum, peanuts, corn, wheat, rice, pecans, and citrus fruit.

The development of IPM strategies was furthered when Dr. Adkisson began collaborating with Dr. Smith on national and international research and promotion projects in the 1960s and 1970s. Joining their interests, talents, and efforts, the two professors and several of their colleagues nationwide committed substantial resources to systematizing and promoting the new IPM programs.

A major breakthrough came with their organization and leadership of the Huffaker Project in 1972. Through this project, the first of its kind, more than 200 scientists from 18 land-grant universities across America tested and refined IPM systems for six major crops. Dr. Adkisson led an expanded version of this project from 1978 to 1985, which involved over 300 scientists, economists, and engineers and developed IPM systems to control insects, mites, pathogens, nematodes, and weeds in alfalfa, apple, cotton, and soybean production.

He was a founding member of the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization Panel of Experts on Integrated Pest Control, later chairing that group from 1992 to 1996 and organizing funding for projects to expand IPM application in developing nations.

During Dr. Adkisson's tenure, a key priority for the panel was developing IPM programs for rice, maize, sorghum, peanuts, cassava, and major fruits and vegetables grown in Africa, Asia, Latin America, and the Middle East. To this end, they worked to train scientists, technicians, and farmers from the developing world and to increase the effectiveness and sustainability of IPM methods by incorporating research from the fields of plant pathology, weed sciences, and mycology. In 1995, he led the establishment of the FAO's Global IPM Facility in Rome to identify, develop, and promote pest control programs for major food crops throughout the world.

His considerable administrative abilities also promoted him to a series of high-ranking positions at Texas A&M beginning in 1978, culminating in his being named Chancellor of the Texas A&M University System from 1986 until 1990. He retired from his professorship in 1994.

At the time he was awarded the Prize, over 75 percent of U.S. farmers were using IPM systems, and the United Nations estimated that over 1 million farmers in more than 60,000 villages in every region of the world had applied IPM methods and saved billions of dollars in chemicals while seeing steady or increased production.