



# THE WORLD FOOD PRIZE

## MEDIA RELEASE

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### World Food Prize Expands Agricultural Connection with Iran

**Rome, Italy ( May 20, 2015 )** - The 2013 World Food Prize Laureate Dr. Marc Van Montagu will deliver the keynote address at the 9<sup>th</sup> National Biotechnology Congress of the Islamic Republic of Iran, which will be held in Tehran, May 24-26, 2015, World Food Prize Foundation president Ambassador Kenneth M. Quinn announced today in a speech he delivered in Rome.

Dr. Van Montagu, one of the world's foremost pioneers of modern agricultural biotechnology, was chosen to represent the World Food Prize at this important conference by Ambassador Quinn, at the invitation of Dr. Behzad Ghareyazie, Director General of the Agricultural Biotechnology Research Institute of Iran (ABRII). Dr. Van Montagu is founder and chairman of the Institute for Plant Biotechnology for Developing Countries at Ghent University in Belgium.

Ambassador Quinn stated that: "The World Food Prize is taking another important step to build upon the special connection that was established in August 2014 when I delivered the keynote address at a special ceremony organized by ABRII in Karaj, Iran to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the birth of Nobel Peace Prize Laureate and World Food Prize founder Dr. Norman. E. Borlaug."

In that address, Ambassador Quinn observed that the commitment to biotechnology in the United States and Iran offered a unique opportunity for bilateral scientific cooperation in addressing the global scourge of wheat rust disease, a problem that Dr. Borlaug had struggled against throughout his career. Referring to a visit by then Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev to an Iowa farm, the Ambassador further noted the significant role that agricultural exchanges played in building trust and understanding between the United States and the Soviet Union in 1959, a time of significant nuclear tension.

As a follow-on action to his trip to Iran, Ambassador Quinn invited Dr. Goodarz Najafian, Director General of the Iran Seed Improvement Institute, to participate in a special panel discussion on wheat rust at the World Food Prize Borlaug Dialogue Symposium in Des Moines, Iowa in October, 2014. Dr. Najafian also had an opportunity to meet with researchers at Iowa State University and to tour an Iowa farm to see how biotechnology was being utilized in American agriculture.

Dr. Van Montagu's participation at the forthcoming Congress in Iran representing the World Food Prize is thus "a third concrete step toward increased understanding and scientific exchanges with Iran in dealing with critical issues in global food security, which hopefully will also contribute to enhanced understanding in other areas and thus promote peace," Ambassador Quinn concluded.

Dr. Van Montagu shared the 2013 World Food Prize with Dr. Mary-Dell Chilton and Dr. Robert Fraley of the United States. More information about their work is available at [www.worldfoodprize.org/laureates](http://www.worldfoodprize.org/laureates).

### ABOUT THE WORLD FOOD PRIZE

The World Food Prize was created in 1986 by Nobel Peace Prize winner Dr. Norman Borlaug, and is the foremost international award recognizing individuals whose achievements have advanced human development by increasing the quality, quantity or availability of food in the world. The World Food Prize annually hosts the Borlaug Dialogue international symposium, which draws over 1,200 people from 60 countries to discuss cutting-edge issues in food security, and several youth education programs to inspire the next generation to explore careers in agriculture and fighting hunger. More at [www.worldfoodprize.org](http://www.worldfoodprize.org).

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