

ABOUT WFO
WFO BODIES
MEMBERS
PARTNERS
STATUTES
VACANCIES
ABOUT US

POLICY
DOCUMENTS
DOCUMENTS
PUBLICATIONS
FARMRECTORY
F@RMLATTERS
CASE STUDIES
BEST PRACTICES
RESOURCES & MATERIALS

FOOD SECURITY
CLIMATE CHANGE
VALUE CHAIN
WOMEN IN
AGRICULTURE
TRADE
CONTRACT
FARMING
AGRICULTURE

CONTACT

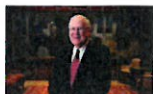
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NEWS
WFO EVENTS
INFO



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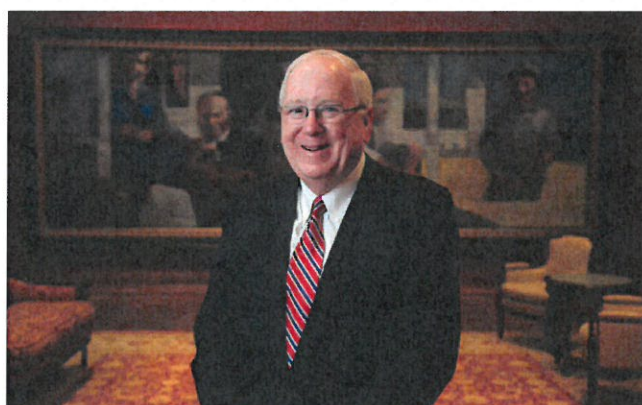
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Q&A with Ambassador Kenneth M.Quinn, President, World Food Prize

"I saw the power of new seeds, when these are made available to farmers. How they could transform the lives of farmers and their families, almost over night"



Rome February 6, 2017 - Dr. Kenneth M. Quinn, former U.S. Ambassador to the Kingdom of Cambodia, assumed the leadership of the World Food Prize Foundation on January 1, 2000, after a 32 year career in the U.S. Foreign Service.

Inspired by the vision of Dr. Norman E. Borlaug, the founder of the **THE WORLD FOOD PRIZE**, Ambassador Quinn has endeavored to build the annual \$250,000 award into the "Nobel Prize for Food and Agriculture".

The World Food Prize is the foremost international award recognizing -- without regard to race, religion, nationality, or political beliefs -- the achievements of individuals who have advanced human development by improving the quality, quantity or availability of food in the world.

The Prize recognizes contributions in any field involved in the world food supply -- food and agriculture science and technology, manufacturing, marketing, nutrition, economics, poverty alleviation, political leadership and the social sciences.

Held each October in Des Moines on or around World Food Day (October 16), the World Food Prize Laureate Award Ceremony, Borlaug Dialogue international symposium and Global Youth Institute have grown in size and stature under the direction of the Ambassador Quinn.

During his diplomatic career, Ambassador Quinn served as a Rural Development advisor in the Mekong Delta; on the National Security Council staff at the White House; as Narcotics Counselor at the U.S. mission to the United Nations in Vienna; for four years as Chairman of the U.S. Inter-agency Task Force on POW/MIAs; and as Director of Iowa SHARES, the humanitarian campaign that sent Iowa doctors, nurses, medical supplies and food to starving Cambodian refugees. Dr. Quinn emerged from these experiences as one of the U.S. government's foremost experts on Indochina. He wrote his doctoral dissertation on the origins of the radical Pol Pot regime and is widely acknowledged as the first person anywhere to report, in 1974, on the genocidal policies of the Khmer Rouge. Twenty years later, while serving as

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Deputy Assistant Secretary of State, his plan of agricultural enhancements and rural roads led to the final eradication of the Khmer Rouge.

He described his ideas and inspiring stories of success in this interview with WFO during his participation to the GFFA2017, held in Berlin, Germany, on 21 January 2017.

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WFO: Let's introduce to our farmers' community what is the World Food Prize, when it has been established and its mandate.

Ambassador Quinn: The World Food Prize is the Nobel Prize for food and agriculture. It was created 30 years ago, in 1986, by Dr. Norman Borlaug, an American scientist who worked around the world and received the Nobel Peace Prize himself for being the father of the Green Revolution. The World Food Prize is meant to recognize and inspire breakthrough achievements of individuals who have advanced human development by improving the quantity, the quality and the availability of food in the world and that, as a result, reduce hunger and malnutrition.

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WFO: How did you get involved into agriculture and food systems?

Ambassador Quinn: I was a diplomat for over 30 years and I ended up being ambassador to Cambodia, and when I retired I was recruited to work with Dr. Borlaug. I worked with him for a decade. The reason why I had an interest in that, because usually diplomats are somebody who goes to fancy parties, they don't get their hands dirty, but when I was a brand new diplomat and I wanted to be in Rome, Paris or London I was sent to South East Asia to work in villages as rural development advisor. I was there when the Green Revolution started and I saw the power that new seeds have when made available to a farmer, how they could transform the life of the farmer and his/her family almost over night and that experience changed the whole course of my career. So I was involved in rural development in developing countries for all of my career.

WFO: Acknowledging your experience and your expertise on the field, what are the current trends of agriculture in developed and developing countries?

Ambassador Quinn: The two things I learnt. The first is that you need to have research, science, technology to develop new things, learn how we can have seeds that can adapt to droughts or floods or rising sea water to solve all the problems that come with climate change. The second thing that I learnt from those villages is that science travels over roads. What happened to me is that we were fixing a road and, at the same time, we were bringing the new agricultural seeds, the very first seeds of the green revolution, and farmers only used them in villages where the roads were fixed. Where the road was round down and broken, not passible, farmers never used the seeds. And this is the lesson from anywhere in the world. And if you look at the UN map as a hunger map, so shaded areas are the 1 billion people who are hungry. And if you put on top of it another map of conflicts, terrorism, poverty and malnutrition, it would be the same areas, and if you put also the world's highways map, where roads end, is where hunger, conflicts, terrorism, poverty and malnutrition all begin. All those things are linked together. The problem of the world is that agriculture people meet to talk about how to make plant grow healthier, quicker, more nutritious but they don't have the infrastructure people, the Ministries of Transports, the Ministries of highways, roads there. They are not in the room. You have to do it together.

WFO: What do you think are the measures at the policy level to improve this gap?

Ambassador Quinn: If countries discommitt certain percentages of their budget to do these things and they see that infrastructures and roads are directly linked to more food, cutting food waste, increasing storage, getting food to markets, this would give those countries the chance to be out of poverty and to be able meet the challenge of feeding 9 plus billion people.

WFO: What do you think are the main threats that farmers and people dealing with agriculture face?

Ambassador Quinn: The things they need. Off course, education. You fix the roads, boys and girls will stay at school longer, child mortality will go down. Producing enough food with the climate change, every kind of technology (satellites, telephone) is very important, you need to have indigenous research and extension workers that take the research findings out of the farmers.

WFO: How do you measure the impact of the World Food Prize?

Ambassador Quinn: The impact of the World Food Prize is measured by our laureates and how many lives have been affected by their actions, how many millions of people have more food. The World Food Prize is quarter million dollars towards 50 thousand dollars every year and we need nominations of people who have done breakthrough achievements that will make them worthy of being considered for our prize.

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WFO: Could you share a success story that can inspire our farmers?

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Ambassador Quinn: Here is a story. There was a young man and his parents were both illiterate, no school, they couldn't read, they couldn't write, they lived in a remote part of Ethiopia in a one room with mud floor. They wanted him to go to school so she saved just few coins she could to pay the tutor to teach him and she left her husband when he wanted to take the boy out of school. So that boy had to walk 15 or 20 km to go to school every week, worked his way through high school and was working in an agricultural college and he was earning money by helping a visiting professor from US. And the professor said: "How could help you if you get in university" and he gave up a chance to be in the Ethiopian Olympic basket team and he got his PHD, went back to Africa and gave research on sorghum, how could sorghum defeat its main threath, striga, and he came up with a way to defeat striga and increase food for hundreds of millions of people in East Africa. In 2009 he came to Des Moines, Iowa, the World Food Capital and he received the World Food Prize, the highest honour for confronting and defeating hunger.

WFO: His name?

Ambassador Quinn: His name is Gebisa Ejeta.

WFO: This is linked to the role of young farmers. What do you think is the role of young farmers and young generations in addressing the current threats of our time (from climate change, malnutrition, hunger and demand for an increasing food production)?

Ambassador Quinn: Dr. Borlaugh believed we have to inspire the next generation and we have a youth program for high school students for World Food Prize. I sent every year 24 students around the world and we bring students from 6/7 other countries to the World Food Prize so they can be in the room with Gebisa Ejeta.

WFO: The World Food Prize events and the Committee on World Food Security annual meeting are held in the same period of the year, i.e. around the World Food Day. This clash may weakness the messages that both organizations are promoting. Do you foresee any collaboration with CFS, in order to double the impact of the two events in the global agricultural community?

Ambassador Quinn: Yes, sure. We always have collaborating with them.

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WFO Bodies
Members
Partners
Statutes
Vacancies

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Farmrectory
F@rmlletters
Policy Documents
Documents
Publications
Case Studies
Best Practices

AGRICULTURE

Food Security
Climate Change
Value Chain
Women in
Agriculture
Trade
Contract Farming

INFO

Calendar
News
WFO Events

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