

KEYNOTE:

TOGETHER FOR THE FUTURE OF FOOD SECURITY
His Majesty King Abdullah II ibn Al Hussein
October 16, 2020 – 9:00–9:30 AM

Hello from Des Moines, Iowa. We are pleased to welcome you to the 2020 International Borlaug Dialogue, an annual convening of food security experts and champions building collaborative solutions to the most pressing challenges associated with increasing the quantity, quality and availability of food for all. We are so pleased you have joined us from all over the world to address urgently important challenges.

Barbara Stinson

President - World Food Prize Foundation

Welcome to the final day of the International Borlaug Dialogue. We are so pleased today to recognize the 75th World Food Day. We want to honor the importance of food that is marked by this day. Food is the moral right of all those who are born into this world. But I also want to acknowledge that, for so many millions of people around the world, today is just another day of food insecurity, hunger and malnutrition. We have so much work to do.

All around the world, countries are celebrating World Food Day, including the U.N. Food Systems Summit, which is sponsoring a 24-hour Food Systems Relay to advance the ongoing dialogue on food system transformation. So watch for this and participate in your area.

This past week so many events, including over 40 major side events, have been hosted by our partners and colleagues from around the world. So go back to your agenda on Whova, because recordings of many of these events are going to be available for a short time. Speakers from across all sectors have brought forward crucial issues and solutions around carbon markets, innovative investments, safe, affordable nutritious diets, and so many other topics.

Today we're going to focus on equity and access in the food system. We're going to talk about the U.N. Food Systems Summit 2021 and visions for the future.

Now, we want to open with a special keynote address from a head of state, demonstrating his leadership on the importance of collaboration for food systems. I am so pleased and privileged to introduce our keynote speaker, His Majesty King Abdullah II of Jordan.

In February 1999, King Abdullah II ascended to the throne, devoting himself to defending Jordan as an island of progress in a turbulent region. He invested in Jordanians' immense human capital, combating terrorism and extremism and working towards peace. Despite Jordan's scarce resources, he's opened his doors to millions of refugees, following a long Hashemite tradition of hospitality to displaced peoples.

He's received numerous awards for his global peace efforts, including the Peace of Westphalia Prize in 2016, the Templeton Prize in 2018, and the Lamp of Peace Award last year in 2019. Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, King Abdullah II has been calling for a renewed global focus on enhancing food security. This is an issue that Jordan has prioritized. He continues and Jordan continues to work closely with organizations such as the World Food Programme, towards a zero hunger SDG-2. How do we accomplish that?

We are honored to welcome His Majesty to deliver a keynote address entitled, *Together for the Future of Food Security*. Watch and enjoy.

His Majesty King Abdullah II ibn Al Hussein Jordan

Bismillah al-Rahman al-Rahim. Thank you, President Stinson, dear friends. My great thanks for the opportunity to join your conference this week, especially on World Food Day. It is a day to celebrate the people who put food on the world's tables – growing, transporting, storing and distributing this essential of life and keeping us safe in this time of COVID.

But today is also a day to remember the fact that for too many millions, this is not a day of food. It is another day of hunger. Let's ask ourselves why in the 21st century are nearly 690 million people hungry. Why, in this day and age, do almost nine million people die of malnutrition or related causes every year? As long as scarcity and hunger exist, we have work to do. And as you have all been discussing over the past few days, the threat did not begin with COVID. This pandemic has had a massive impact on the food systems we depend on, but other serious challenges to food security were already there to see – climate change, global threats to freshwater, global economic crises, and regional turmoil, and an unprecedented global refugee crisis burdening food supplies for refugees and host communities alike – an issue Jordan is all too familiar with.

So the question isn't whether to act. The question is what kind of action will take us where we want to go? It won't be enough after COVID simply to rebuild the old ways. We need to seize the moment to create a better, more effective and more inclusive global system. This is why I have been calling for reglobalization, strengthening collective global action for mutual benefit, and focusing on the innovative spirit the future will demand. Reglobalization will steer global resources as needed into key areas such as agricultural infrastructure. And let's ensure adequate support for advanced ideas for production, supply, storage, knowledge sharing, and connectivity.

At a time when so much resources are being invested into arms, let's prioritize the health of peoples. Support is especially important for farmers in developing countries who need better access to finance and training to serve their communities. Let's leverage new agritech solutions to diversify crops and create strong food security safety nets. Collaboration is key to regional, as well as global, action. Jordanians have long taken pride in being a source of support for our neighbors. Our strategic location at the crossroads of Africa, Asia and Europe allows Jordan to serve as a facilitator of broad international action and as a regional food hub.

This would also help speed up and strengthen the world's response to food crises and disasters such as the tragic blast in Beirut last August, which destroyed food silos and vital port facilities.

Responding to global threats means recalibrating our world and its systems to build global food security and nutrition. There must be strong regulatory and policy frameworks, including fiscal investments and instruments that are a global exchange of agritech knowhow and increased investment in scientific research.

And we need to move forward now. Coordination is essential to prevent the global crisis of hunger and malnutrition that could occur if we aren't ready for new pandemics and crises in the days ahead.

My friends in the Middle East, we have a deep understanding of food security and the promised better life it can bring. Some 10,000 years ago my region was home to the first agricultural revolution when human beings first began to grow and trade crops. These ancient peoples of our lands and others looked beyond the old ways of doing things, and the innovations they made liberated early humankind to look to the future. Today, we need to act no less and no less boldly and look to our own future with new eyes.

Before the harvest, always comes the work, planning, planting, watering, caring, meeting change with change, and finding new ways to help life grow and thrive. We have a responsibility to safeguard today's fields and farms and harvests. And more, it is up to us to plant new seeds so that future generations can live and thrive. Planting seeds for the future is what you are doing in this Dialogue and other efforts to achieve global food security. God-willing, your work will result in a worldwide harvest, a safe and nutritious food supply that is sustainable, affordable, good for the environment, and accessible to all.

We must keep working together if we wish to succeed. Thank you.

Barbara Stinson

Thank you so much to King Abdullah for those prescient comments. Isn't it tremendous to have such a global leader as a champion for food security around the world, talking about the kind of action that we need to take now, so we go in the direction we want to go, planting new seeds for future generations. We so appreciate everyone joining in for these discussions and the leadership being provided around the world.

We want to also recognize and commemorate World Food Day today because it is the 75th anniversary of World Food Day and the 40th celebration here in the U.S. We acknowledge the important role this day plays in advancing the fight against hunger and poverty. Similar to the focus of a number of Borlaug Dialogue sessions this year, in 1987, World Food Day emphasized the theme of translating awareness into action. I guess we are still looking forward to that transition – awareness into action.

In 1989, Patricia Young was the World Food Day National Coordinator, and she said to us, "Our work can't be measured and will not be finished in our lifetime." That was 31 years ago. She said, "That only makes our commitment the more precious. Our commitment is so precious."

This year the U.N. World Food Programme is winning the Nobel Peace Prize, acknowledging the critical food systems support that they've been bringing through this program in the year of a global pandemic but for decades. So, we are so honored to commemorate World Food Day in many ways. We keep an extensive archive here at the World Food Prize Hall of Laureates, and who can visit our Whova community section in the thread on our Archives, commemorating

World Food Day to hear even more of some of the importance of this day and what it's meant in history.

So now I want to talk a little bit about what's gone on this past week, especially in our major Roundtables, three that we've held. The first roundtable on Monday, speakers shared their compelling arguments for carbon markets and carbon sequestration technologies, following on a wonderful opening from Al Gore and Rattan Lal, our laureate. They said in the roundtable, "We cannot wait for perfection. It will take too long to get to perfection. We must act now." This comes from a major CEO of an agricultural company. Technology innovations and solutions need to be brought to every table in the world in an equitable way. These are important reminders to all of us, and there's so many more gems from all of our speakers.

In the second roundtable, people shared the importance of investment, collaboration and partnerships in advancing food system transformation. Comments were made, such as, "The luxury of working in isolation is no longer an option. We must collaborate going forward in order to push progress forward." And, "There's no more willing partner that wants to be involved with smallholder farmers than industry." So we're all rooting to take up that challenge, that offer. Another comment was made by one of the leaders of one of our U.N. systems, "An investment in a farmer in food systems has immediate returns. We have to take advantage of those returns."

On Wednesday, we hosted a roundtable on the importance of interdisciplinary approaches to addressing nutrition and food security. These speakers brought forth such a wealth of knowledge on embedding nutrition in all of our food systems work. We were challenged by saying, "We must have the imagination to be able to inject nutrition issues into all of the new spaces. Nutrition has to be at the forefront." Also, and this from a smallholder representative in farming, "The private sector is essential to policy change. COVID has brought down the walls between business and government, and those walls have to stay down.

Agricultural policy has to be better connected to nutrition outcomes. We have to prioritize the production of fresh foods and produce. Our 2020 laureate challenged us to invert our food production system. Instead of 75% of our agricultural lands globally producing staple crops and grains and 25% producing high nutrient content foods, he suggested we must invert this. In our lifetime 75% of agricultural land needs to produce nutritious fresh foods.

This year we celebrate the anniversary of Dr. Norman Borlaug's Nobel Peace Prize. How appropriate that we are witnessing this global commitment to transforming and building resilient food systems that leap forward and go beyond the cracks in the system that we already knew existed. Achieving equitable, sustainable and improved nutrition in the food system requires a swift evolution of our definitions, our research, our plans, all of our approaches and practices to building resilience. And we have to continue that now.

This week everyone involved in the discussions has been striving to define what are those needed actions. Where do they need to take place in all of these areas?

So thank you all for joining us for this special keynote session. It's been a pleasure hearing from the King of Jordan.

Next we're going to be moving into a very special session focused on the U.N. 2020 Food Systems Summit hosted by Dr. Agnes Kalibata. For this special session I want to make a unique point about our overall approach this year. So, delegates of the World Food Prize Global Youth Institute have offered their vision for a resilient, transformed food system through the research they've been conducting. They've been in group deliberations with foremost international experts. And they've been writing; they've been writing down their thoughts. They've been participating throughout the week in all of our discussions, but today, they're here with us the whole day. And we bring a representative from the Global Youth Institute to that discussion of the U.N. Food Systems Summit. The work and the voices of all of these young people, our delegates, will be summarized in a white paper produced following this meeting. These 215 young leaders are articulating a vision for a food- and nutrition-secure world, and we are going to listen.

Working in partnership with the many organizations that are supporting the 2021 Food Systems Summit, we're going to elevate and engage the next generation of food systems leaders. So I encourage all of you to post on your favorite social media platform. Use #FoodPrize20, tag us on Twitter and Instagram @WorldFoodPrize, and go to Whova. Share your comments, your questions in the chat for each session for the rest of the day, and check out the resources that are in each session. Also, bring your ideas forward into the Community section. That will go on and continue to live, even after our meetings today. So join us for the next discussion. We start promptly at 9:30 Central Time, and you can access that session right there on your agenda page on Whova. Thank you so much, and see you there.