

CLOSING KEYNOTE

Sara Eckhouse

October 16, 2020 - 12:30-1:00 PM

Barbara Stinson

President - World Food Prize Foundation

Well, I can't believe it, but it's the closing session of the International Borlaug Dialogue for 2020. Thank you all for your commitment and your interest in attending so many various sessions over the whole past week. It's been an amazing week, and there is so much energy and so much great input and depiction of the issues for us to follow up on and keep moving forward.

I invite you to continue to post on the social media platforms and get on Whova and make your comments, share your questions and reflections and ideas. Whova is going to live on with us for a little while longer, so check out that community section before it goes away.

So now I'm pleased to introduce a special speaker that's going to provide the closing keynote of the Borlaug Dialogue. Sara Eckhouse has been here with us the entire week. She also participated on our very first day, investment and finance panel and joins us from New York. Sara is Executive Director of FoodShot Global. Thanks, Sara.

Sara Eckhouse

Executive Director, FoodShot Global

Thank you, Barbara. It's really been such an amazing week, and I'm honored to have the opportunity to close things out and end this symposium on a high note today, which appropriately is World Food Day.

Barbara Stinson

Let me just say one more word about FoodShot. I should have continued on. Let me just say one more word about FoodShot Global. So just so people know, because it's a very unusual investment platform. It's an integrated investment platform, including half a million dollars in groundbreaking prizes and up to 10 million in equity and investment. It's meant to accelerate transformation to a healthy, sustainable and equitable food system. Because this is your moniker, I wanted to be sure everybody knew that's where you're coming from in your overall observations about this week. So, please, turning to you, Sara.

Sara Eckhouse

Thanks so much. So like I said, it's been an amazing week, and even with the challenging circumstances of holding a virtual event, I've been so impressed, inspired by all of the sessions this week. From the opening conversation between Dr. Lal and Vice President Gore, to the diverse and engaging roundtables to learning more about the upcoming 2021 Food Systems Summit and of course the dozens of side events that were just fascinating in their own right.

Dr. Lal's profound words that *Soil health provides the fingerprint of human health* and that *soil degradation is the cause of global malnutrition* will certainly stay with me.

I'm calling in today from Manhattan, a land that was once owned by the Wappinger and Munsee and Lenape tribes. And I grew up in Des Moines, home of the World Food Prize and land of the Iowa Sauk and Meskwaki tribes.

Fifty years since Norman Borlaug won the Nobel Prize, we are looking to the future and how we can collectively create a healthier, more sustainable and more equitable food system. We can't achieve that goal without acknowledging and reflecting on the history of our land and agricultural systems. Over the next 50 years we have the responsibility to confront current imbalances and past injustices. Here in the U.S., that means incorporating strategy to address the legacy of a food system that in many cases was built on land theft, slavery and racism.

Now when Dr. Borlaug gave his Nobel lecture in 1970, he said *There are no miracles in agriculture production*. Unfortunately, that's true, but there are what I call FoodShots or MoonShots for better food – bold, audacious advances in science and technology that can bring us closer to achieving a food system that ensures quality nutrition for a growing global population while protecting local communities, building economic resilience, and contributing to ecosystem health and biodiversity. Like President Kennedy's moonshot, these FoodShots are not easy or straightforward to achieve. So when it comes to the future of our planet and our collective global responsibility to defeat malnutrition, especially in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic, which even under the U.N.'s best case scenario is likely to cause hunger to surge more in 2020 than in the past five years combined. We simply must act. The cost of inaction is too great.

So as we close out a week in which we've been surrounded by brilliant minds and leaders, where do we go from here? How do we take these moments of inspiration and insight about the challenges we face and turn the symposium into a catalyst for meaningful change? What will it take to achieve our audacious goals of harnessing the power of soil to combat and mitigate the impact of climate change, deploying capital in innovative ways to increase resiliency, ending hunger and malnutrition in all its forms, and building a fair, more equitable and inclusive food system? Here again, there are no miracles or silver bullets, but there are some essential ingredients in many of these echo themes that we've heard throughout the week.

First, we have to recognize the challenges, or FoodShots, which of course are also opportunities and articulate a vision for a better future. We've already made some real progress here. The four roundtables of this symposium represent key FoodShots – climate change, access to capital, nutrition and equity. And over the last week, Barbara and the World Food Prize team have led us in dialogues to create a roadmap for innovating and transforming the food and agriculture system.

At FoodShot Global, we went through our own process of working with our 20+ partners from around the world to collaboratively identify FoodShots. We were looking for key leverage

points that could accelerate progress on our mission of a healthy, sustainable, and equitable food system. As we consider factors such as global relevance and best ability, urgency, and alignment with the U.N. Sustainable Development Goals, we landed in much the same place as this year's laureate, Dr. Lal, in recognizing the need to build a foundation for a better food system from the ground up.

Soil health was our inaugural FoodShot, because improving soil health not only rebounds ecosystems to make them more resilient to climate change, it can also enhance nutrient bioavailability in crops and improve farmer profitability, including for smallholder farmers around the world. We framed our soil FoodShot as a call for regeneration, not just conservation. We must harness soil's power to go beyond the status quo and improve human and planetary health.

Our second FoodShot, precision protein, speaks to a long-term commitment to nutrition and human health, as well as a nuanced approach to a complex topic. We are committed to innovations in production, processing and personalization across protein sectors, so that we can provide equitable access to the bioavailability and digestible protein for a growing population, while also minimizing the strain on natural resources. With precision protein, we prioritized the relationship between agriculture and food as key to combating hunger and beyond that to securing nutrition.

Importantly, FoodShots are not only about identifying levers for transforming the entire food system. We also have to frame these challenges, again, also opportunities in a way that brings people together and catalyzes meaningful action. And just as Norman Borlaug was first and foremost a scientist, we too believe that science and innovation, from machine learning to big data, to genetic and genomic analysis, to harnessing the power of the microbiome, to digitalization across the supply chain, will drive progress on these FoodShots.

Second, we must collaborate both across sectors and across geographies. Achieving FoodShots will require global efforts and contributions from everyone – farmers and ranchers, academia, business, government, NGOs and consumers. The urgency and scale of the challenges demand that we have all hands on deck. Dr. Borlaug saw the value in collaboration via the International Research Institutes, IRRI, CIMMYT, IITA and CIAT. And we must now go even further in working together across industries and geographic boundaries.

The complexity of the food system requires collaboration among food and agriculture stakeholders, producers, processors, distributors, retailers. But we must go beyond the food sector to reflect that food systems underpin all of the SDGs. If we want to end poverty and improve health, we must improve nutrition. If we want to conserve natural resources and protect biodiversity on land and below water, we must change how we produce and consume food. If we want peace, we must have nutrition security.

During the nutrition roundtable, I heard compelling calls for more focus and targeted efforts to help those who are disadvantaged, including by bringing them into the conversation about food systems and adopting their worldview. When we talk about ending food security, we need to talk with the people who are food insecure about what they need and include them in the decision-making process. As we heard in the equity roundtable, collaboration must go beyond the usual suspects, those with power and money and prestige, if we are to develop the tools and systems that truly fulfill Dr. Borlaug's promise that *Food is the moral right of all who are born into this world.*

Third, we must invest in systems that will enable long-term progress. Here again Dr. Borlaug was prescient in representing that, if we are to capitalize fully on the past biological accomplishments and realize the prospective accomplishments, there must be far greater investments in research and education in the future than in the past. For FoodShot, this has meant not only investing in companies but also using non-dilutive price funding to support early-stage entrepreneurs, researchers and policy advocates, all of whom play a critical role in advancing the higher risk, higher reward, innovations and systemic changes that are necessary to achieve our goals. We have to look at the entire innovation ecosystem and support progress at each step.

Another critical element is escaping from the short-term thinking of quarterly earnings reports, which fail to account for external costs to help in the environment. Profitability is part of sustainability, but we must prioritize long-term viability as well as recognize the cost of inaction.

Finally, we must come together with humility and a willingness to rethink the status quo. Dr. Borlaug himself hoped that we could emancipate ourselves from our dependence on artificial nutrients. He foresaw the power of microbes to provide much of the needed fertilizer for crops by taking nitrogen from the air and fixing it without cost. And so we must be open to new technologies and approaches that can dramatically reduce the pollution of our soil, water and air, enhance profitability for farmers, especially smallholder farmers, and meaningfully improve access to nutrition.

This means that some industries will have to pivot or adapt their business models to our new reality in which the dominant mono-cropping is destroying biodiversity while failing to provide nutrition security. Rather than yield per acre, we should prioritize nutrition per acre. We should rethink our approach to risk. The greatest risk is not short-term financial loss but long-term degradation of natural resources that could threaten entire ecosystems and agricultural supply chains. And we should reassess how we compensate and care for workers who are in the supply chain, many of whom face dangerous working conditions and meager pay. As we heard this week, the people working to feed the world suffer the most from the consequences of malnutrition.

These types of fundamental shifts are absolutely essential if we are to have any chance for turning the tide against hunger and malnutrition, including the dramatic increase of diet-related diseases like diabetes and hypertension, avoiding ecosystem collapse and mitigating the most devastating effects of climate change and protecting workers throughout the food system from exploitation. We have to take a more holistic and future-forward approach so that we can account for the true cost and benefits of food when it comes to human, environmental and societal health.

In many cases, achieving these shifts will require bold, new approaches from government, such as ending subsidies that distort economic incentives for farmers, implementing policies to reward farmers for protecting natural resources, and integrating nutrition outcomes into our agricultural policies. I spent eight years working at USDA, so I know that bureaucracies are not always nimble and agile, but these changes are possible with committed leadership and persistent pressure.

So where will we be in 50 years, 100 years since Dr. Borlaug won his Nobel Prize. In large part, that's up to us. In my work, I will be looking to the participants in this conference as resources, potential partners in creative thinking, research and development. We are not together in the

same place, but we share the sense of urgency that we must act forcefully and immediately to effect change.

FoodShot Global has made a long-term commitment to innovations in soil health and nutrition security, and we are eager to join in uncommon collaboration to advance common goals. There are great resources here. Let's put them to good use so that when we meet again in the future at next year's U.N. Food Systems Summit and other events, we can look back at this year's Borlaug Dialogue as a catalyst to action.

At a time when many of us face restricted movement, let's commit to being open to outreach and new partnerships in what Barbara has rightly called *the evolution of the Green Revolution*. Thank you so much.

Barbara Stinson

Sara, thank you so much. Remarkable comments. What a great conclusion to what's been an incredible week for all of us. We hope that we can be that catalyst, that we support this system that is moving forward toward tremendous and dramatic change.

We appreciate how you've conjured our hero and our inspiration, Dr. Norman Borlaug, in so many of your remarks. And honestly, it's been amazing to see how so many of our experts and leaders and youth and young professionals from all over the world have also done that.

Evolution of the Green Revolution—I think we're well on the way.

So having focused on, really, evolution of the food systems here, on more of a global stage I'm proud to announce that as the World Food Prize Foundation goes forward, we are going to also, coming up through the rest of the year, be moving towards other venues and more dialogue. So I'm happy to announce that we are going to conduct a regional event focused in Southeast Asia after the New Year. And there will be other events coming forward. We really want to contribute to this important year on the development and evolution of resilience in the food system.

So, what to look ahead for. We're going to post everything on Whova for a short time, including Sara's speech. I'm sure it's going viral; it'll be right on YouTube. And so, for a short period, you can share resources, bring others into the conversation and share from that platform. We're going to produce a meeting summary, a brief set of highlights, and we'll offer you a survey to complete as well.

It's been an incredible week. I can't thank all of you enough for joining us, but now I want to take a moment to express my incredible appreciation for the team at the World Food Prize Foundation. I always do this. I feel and live my emotions. So, I am not the one producing this. This entire event has been produced by a tremendous staff. You cannot believe the array of people that have worked in dedication and fortitude for months and months and months. So, these are the individuals that have had a hand in putting this event together and making it a success. This is the staff of the World Food Prize Foundation, mostly here in Des Moines, but calling from all over. Everybody give a wave! You can see all of them. You know many of them. I'm so thankful to all of you. We worked hard, we worked together. The next generation of the World Food Prize Foundation is here, and we are launched. So, stay connected with us. Share all of your progress as everything continues. Contact us. And next year we'll revisit all of the

accomplishments of the last year and continue that collaboration going forward. And hopefully we'll be welcoming you all here to Des Moines, Iowa where we can meet in person safely going forward. Stay safe, take care, and see you all again soon. Thank you.