

# World Food Prize Laureates Open Letter: U.S. Leadership Needed to Help End World Hunger

February 23, 2021

The Honorable Joseph R. Biden Jr.  
President of the United States of America  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20500

**EMBARGOED UNTIL  
FEB. 23, 2021 at 9 A.M. CST**

Dear Mr. President,

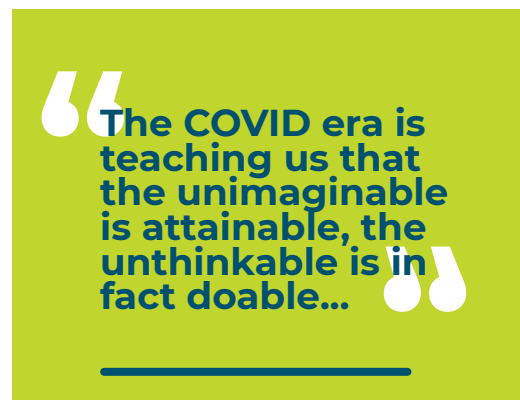
As World Food Prize Laureates from across the globe, we have dedicated decades to driving change in food systems, continuing the legacy of Nobel Peace Prize recipient Dr. Norman Borlaug. Some of us are American, some not, but we all recognize that at this time, leadership from the United States (U.S.) is pivotal to achieving the global goals on food.

Even pre-COVID-19, hunger was on the rise, climate emissions—in part driven by the food system—were not on track to meet the Paris Agreement targets, and the United Nations (UN) Food and Agriculture Organization reported in 2020 that an estimated [3 billion people could not afford a healthy diet](#) in 2017. While the world reduced absolute poverty from [2 billion people in 1990 to 800 million people](#) before the pandemic, the UN Development Programme approximates [“COVID-19 could push the number of people living in extreme poverty to over 1 billion by 2030.”](#)

In a world rattled by COVID-19, now is the time for audacious ambition as we envision what the world could look like in 2030, the year the Sustainable Development Goals should be met. Let us imagine a world in which everyone is well-nourished and no one goes to bed hungry. *How do we get there?*

First, cast a **wide-angle lens on our food systems** that produce, distribute, process, market, and prepare food. Food systems intertwine hunger, nutrition, food safety, biodiversity, resource use, climate emissions, jobs and livelihoods, as well as the resilience of families, communities, and economies. We know that improvements in food systems create huge benefits in all of these critical areas.

Second, **strengthen and leverage our alliances** to raise ambitions and find game changers for food. The COVID era is teaching us that the unimaginable is attainable, the unthinkable is in fact doable: vaccines in under a year; unprecedented economic relief packages; doing global business from home; digitized commerce even in the most fragile settings; unprecedented community solidarity; and increasing the number of people in food safety net programs from 0.6 billion to 2 billion. The returns for imagination and boldness have never been greater.



Third, provide **leadership for high impact**. In September 2021, the UN Secretary-General will lead a Food Systems Summit to mobilize global action on hunger. The Summit involves civil society, business, and development agencies—everyone—to work with governments. It is the People’s Summit, and its aim is action, not declaration. In addition, the UN named 2021

the International Year of Fruits and Vegetables to catalyze action on nutrition and health. The Nutrition for Growth Summit will be hosted in Tokyo in December this year to address deepening food insecurity and malnutrition globally and the impacts of COVID-19 on donor aid and nutrition targets.

Ongoing research shows what we all know—namely, that **improving all of the elements of food systems simultaneously tackles the great challenges of our time**: economic instability, climate change, overwhelmed health systems, strained environmental systems, and inequalities that leave families vulnerable.

**The opportunity for renewed U.S. leadership to transform food systems has never been greater.** The appetite of partners around the world to work with the U.S. in both the public and private sectors is strong. We urge the Biden-Harris Administration to seize this moment and invest in development and cooperation to achieve zero hunger by 2030. ***American leadership on getting food systems right will inspire and embolden others to join forces to end hunger, counter climate change, generate jobs, and promote responsible stewardship of the environment.***

**“We urge the Biden-Harris Administration to seize this moment and invest in development and cooperation to achieve zero hunger by 2030.”**

Evidence suggests that increased investment in food security is in the U.S.’s interest. Supporting economic growth globally leads to increased trade for American entities, increases stability in conflict areas, builds bonds of solidarity and trust that are the bedrock of diplomacy, and alleviates the suffering of the most vulnerable. These outcomes reflect long-held, treasured American values and offer opportunities to realize global aspirations.

In 2009, post-financial crisis and as a result of the L’Aquila Declaration, the U.S. announced the \$3.5 billion Feed the Future Initiative with bipartisan support, helping to reverse decades-long declines in funding for food and agriculture around the world. This American investment [prompted collective global investments of \\$22 billion](#) and triggered progress for hundreds of millions.

According to the recent [Ceres2030 report](#), we could end global hunger by 2030 with an extra annual investment of \$33 billion, a small fraction of the world’s COVID mitigation investment.

## U.S. ACTIONS NEEDED

In all humility, we call on the Administration of U.S. President Biden to:

- 1 re-establish American global leadership to end hunger,**
- 2 play a leadership role in the upcoming UN Food Systems Summit and other global initiatives,**
- 3 refresh U.S. evidence-based policy and investment to achieve the goal of ending hunger, and**
- 4 expand the highly-successful USAID Feed the Future Initiative and Innovation Labs to reach more countries.**

Such an agenda will help the U.S.—and the rest of the world—achieve the four-way win so desperately needed on climate, health, jobs and hunger.

As the world staggers out of COVID and into the light of 2021, we seek to illuminate our collective path towards 2030. **We urge the Biden-Harris Administration to focus on the promise to *Build Back Better* in transforming our food systems.**

U.S. leadership in ending global hunger is imperative and must be backed by bold actions and your personal commitment for the U.S. to engage on major global initiatives. Nothing is more important than ending global hunger and malnutrition. In the words of U.S. Vice President Harris: be **“bold, fearless and ambitious.”**

Signed in Partnership,

**Rattan Lal**  
Director, OSU Carbon Management & Sequestration Center  
2020 Laureate




**Simon Groot**  
Founder,  
East-West Seed  
2019 Laureate



**Lawrence Haddad**  
Executive Director,  
Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition  
2018 Laureate




**David Nabarro**  
Strategic Director,  
4SD  
2018 Laureate



**Akinwumi A. Adesina**  
President, African Development Bank  
2017 Laureate



**Maria Andrade**  
Principal Scientist,  
Sweetpotato Breeder,  
CIP  
2016 Laureate



**Howarth Bouis**  
Founding Director,  
HarvestPlus  
2016 Laureate



**Jan Low**  
Principal Scientist,  
International Potato Center (CIP)  
2016 Laureate



**Robert Mwangi**  
Sweetpotato Breeder,  
International Potato Center (CIP)  
2016 Laureate



**Mary-Dell Chilton**  
Distinguished Science Fellow, Syngenta  
2013 Laureate



**Robert T. Fraley**  
Former Executive VP & CTO, Monsanto  
2013 Laureate



**David Beckmann**  
President Emeritus,  
Bread for the World  
2010 Laureate



**Jo Luck**  
Former President,  
Heifer International  
2010 Laureate



**Gebisa Ejeta**  
Director, Purdue Center for Global Food Security  
2009 Laureate



**Robert J. Dole**  
Former United States Senator  
2008 Laureate



**Philip Nelson**  
Professor Emeritus,  
Purdue University  
2007 Laureate



**Edson Lobato**  
Former Technical Director,  
Embrapa Cerrados  
2006 Laureate



**Alysson Paolinelli**  
President, Instituto Fórum do Futuro  
2006 Laureate



**Modadugu V. Gupta**  
Senior Research Fellow,  
WorldFish  
2005 Laureate



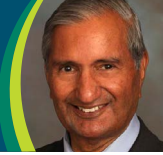
**Pedro Sanchez**  
Professor, Tropical Soils,  
University of Florida  
2002 Laureate



**Per Pinstrup-Andersen**  
Professor Emeritus,  
Cornell University  
2001 Laureate



**Gurdev Khush**  
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University of California, Davis  
1996 Laureate



**Hans R. Herren**  
President,  
Millennium Institute & Biovision Foundation  
1995 Laureate



**Muhammad Yunus**  
Chairman,  
Yunus Centre  
1994 Laureate

