

Report from the Borlaug Dialogue International Symposium 2016

By: Njeri Karanu

knjeri2003@gmail.com



Njeri Karanu

The 2016 Borlaug Dialogue International Symposium was held in Des Moines, Iowa USA October 12-14, 2016. It is one of the biggest annual food and agriculture events in the world. The symposium brings together international leaders, policy experts, scientists, professionals, innovators, thinkers and doers in the agricultural space for week long discussions about the future of food and agriculture in the world.

The title of the 2016 Borlaug Dialogue International Symposium was “Let food be thy medicine” (...and medicine be thy food), a quote attributed to Hippocrates back in the 5th century. Hippocrates, the father of western medicine recognized the importance of eating well and the value certain foods have on good health. The focus on this year’s event was on nutrition. Special focus was on developing countries, which continue to carry the burden of malnutrition even as their economies grow. Wealth is not directly proportional to health.

This year’s event celebrated 30 years since Dr. Norman Borlaug founded the World Food Prize (WFP). The foundation recognized key people who joined Dr. Borlaug in creating this prize, which was envisioned as the “Nobel Prize” of food and agriculture. This year’s WFP also marked 30 years of another organization that Dr. Borlaug co-founded: The Sasakawa Africa Association (SAA). Dr. Borlaug co-founded SAA together with Ryoichi Sasakawa and former US president Jimmy Carter to promote appropriate technologies to increase production, thereby leading Africa towards a Green Revolution. The Sasakawa Africa Association is chaired by Prof. Ruth Oniang’o since 2010, a year after Dr. Borlaug died.

There were many parallel events/meetings at the World Food Prize. Of note are the prize ceremonies: The Borlaug Field Award for Research and Application which was received by Dr. Andrew Mude of Kenya. Dr. Mude, an economist at International Livestock Research Center (ILRI), developed an index-based insurance product for pastoral communities in northern Kenya and Ethiopia, areas hard hit by drought. Data is generated

through satellite monitoring of vegetation, allowing for insurance payouts to be made to cattle farmers.

The World Food Prize Laureate Award Ceremony was held Thursday October 13th 2016. Drs. Robert Mwangi, Maria Andrade and Jan Low of International Potato Center (CIP) and Dr. Howarth Bouis of HarvestPlus were honored for their outstanding pioneer biofortification (breeding micronutrient-dense staple crops) work on orange-fleshed sweet potato, that is improving the health of 10 million rural poor in Africa, Asia, and Latin America.

In the two days preceding the WFP events, Prof. Ruth Oniang'o and I travelled to Cresco, Iowa to visit the birthplace and childhood home of Dr. Borlaug. The Norman Borlaug Heritage Foundation through its volunteers is doing a great job in preserving history and telling the story of the Father of the Green Revolution. Details are in the following pictorial

.

Pictures from the visit to Dr. Norman Borlaug's family farm



Prof. Ruth Oniang'o with George Cummings (former extension staff at Iowa State University) at a tour of the Borlaug Learning Center and ISU Northeast Research station and Demonstration Farm



Wall exhibit of the life and times of Dr. Norman Borlaug



George Cummings showing us a denitrification plant at the experimental farm. This plant prevents accumulation of nitrates in ground water due to fertilizer use



Meeting with Ken Pecinovsky (center) the farm superintendent who was busy combining soybean



Njeri Karanu at the ISU Northeast Research station and Demonstration Farm



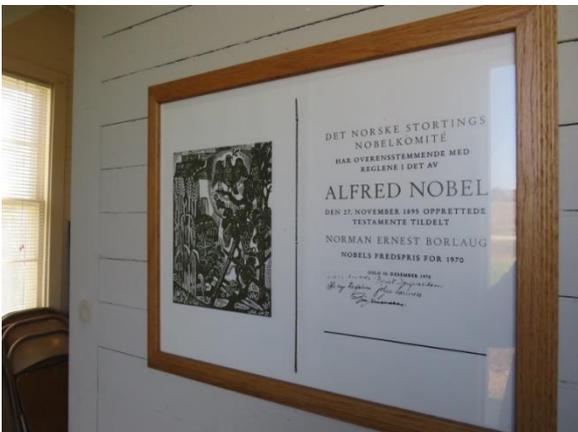
Prof. Ruth Oniang'o meeting
 The Borlaug Heritage Foundation Board members: Tom Spindler,
 Mark Johnson, Maurice Kramer and George Cummings



Tom Spindler, Prof. Ruth Oniang'o,
 Njeri Karanu, Mark Johnson, Maurice Kramer pictured here on the
 Borlaug family farm compound



The one room school house where Dr. Borlaug began his education



A copy of Dr. Borlaug's Nobel Peace Prize (awarded in 1970) posted
 at the entrance of the school house



The childhood home of Dr. Borlaug. He lived here with his parents and
 his 2 sisters Charlotte and Palma



Inside the Borlaug's home.
Inset: picture of Dr. Borlaug's parents,
Henry Borlaug and Clara Vaala (left)
and aunt and uncle, Inger Vaala and Nels Ellingson (right)



The Borlaug family barn
where they kept their animals and milked their cows



The milk shed/ outdoor refrigeration. To keep milk cool, they would
put the pales of milk in a tub full of water (inset) that would be
constantly refilled by water pumped from a deep cool well



The Borlaug family's first motorized tractor. With this purchase, farm
work became easier and Dr. Borlaug could go to school uninterrupted



Prof. Ruth Oniang'o pictured here sitting on the front porch of the house where Dr. Borlaug was born



George Cummings, Tom Spindler, Prof. Ruth Oniang'o, Sue Barnes (Iowa State University Extension and Outreach office) and Njeri Karanu pictured here next to a statue of Dr. Borlaug in downtown Cresco

Pictures from the World Food Prize Events



Prof. Ruth Oniang'o speaking on a panel on Advancing Africa's Food Nutrition and Security through Public-Private Partnerships (PPP) in Agricultural Science, Technology and Infrastructure Development



Four of the recipients of the Borlaug Award for Field Research and Application: Dr. Bram Govaerts (2014), Dr. Andrew Mude (2016), Dr. Charity Mutegi (2013) and Eric Pohlman (2015) at a Panel titled: Borlaug-Rockefeller: Inspiring the Next Generation



Women Leaders Driving Science and Innovation for Agricultural Transformation in Africa panel. Lindiwe Sibanda (FANPRAN), Prof. Ruth Oniang'o (SAA), H. E. Ameenah Gurib-Fakim (President, Republic of Mauritius), Dominique Charron (IDRC), Jemimah Njuki (IDRC), Fatima Denton (UNECA)



Prof Ruth Oniang'o and H.E. Ameenah Gurib-Fakim
pictured here during the discussion on women driving science and innovation for Africa



Drs. Jan Low, Robert Mwangi, Howarth Bouis and Maria Andrade, 2016 laureates. *Picture source:* <http://www.cgiar.org>



Dr. Mude receives the Borlaug Field Award from Ronnie Coffman (chairman of the jury, WFP Foundation), Judith Rodin (President, Rockefeller Foundation) and Amb. Kenneth Quinn (President, World Food Prize Foundation)

Photo by Kathryn Cawdrey. Source: <https://muearth.wordpress.com/>