

**OPENING KEYNOTE SESSION:**  
**FOOD, AGRICULTURE, ENERGY, AND THREATS TO GLOBAL SECURITY**  
October 14, 2009 – 1:00-2:30 p.m.

**Ambassador Kenneth Quinn** – President, the World Food Prize Foundation

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Our third speaker of the opening keynote session is Her Excellency Gerda Verburg, the minister of agriculture, nature, and food quality in the Netherlands.

You know, we have people from 65 or 70 countries who show up for the World Food Prize, Minister, but we don't have enough connection with Europe. And so we sat down and, looking, we said, "Who can we get?" We were looking to who would be interesting to come from Europe, and we came across your name.

And you have an interesting background in the Netherlands, but what really intrigued us was that you were the chairperson of the UN Commission on Sustainable Development's 17<sup>th</sup> session. So we said, "That's who we need to have come." And we are so grateful to you for your willingness to do that.

Minister Verburg has led the Netherlands Ministry since February 2007, and she was previously a member of the House of Representatives of the States General for the Christian Democratic Alliance from 1998 to 2007. And just like Ellen Kullman, you have quite a diverse background. Prior to that, she served as general secretary of the Protestant Young Farmers Association, worked on leading youth issues for the Construction Workers Union, and affiliated to the National Federation of Christian Trade Unions.

In May 2009 she was the chair of the UN Commission on Sustainable Development that reached an agreement, as a result of her leadership, on a clear path forward to achieve sustainable agriculture in developed and developing countries. She also had been a member of the Social and Economic Council, the Labor Foundation, served on the executive committee of the European Trade Union Confederation and on the Board of Inter-church Organization for Development Cooperation.

Please join me in welcoming Minister Gerda Verburg.

**H.E. Gerda Verburg** – Minister of Agriculture, Nature, and Food Quality, the Netherlands

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Thank you very much. Now, ladies and gentlemen, you know everything about me. And it's a great honor to be here

Ladies and gentlemen, the years 2008 and 2009 have shown very clearly the interdependent character of the world's economy. Really, no country or economic sector was exempted from the sometimes disastrous effect of the worldwide financial and economic crisis, especially the countries and the people who are still reeling from the onslaught of the food and energy crisis. Bailouts of huge companies, subprime mortgages, as well as the debate about bonuses for managers of financial institutions, have taken over the front page in the papers.

However, we must not forget that a food crisis is still there. It is still working. As the organizers of the 2009 Borlaug Dialogue state, this poses a threat, not only to the well-being of nearly a billion people, but also to national and international security.

Unfortunately, one of the important people who could inspire us all in finding ways out of this food crisis and in finding answers to the challenge of feeding 9 billion people in 2050 is no longer with us. Dr. Norman

Borlaug died recently, nearly 40 years after receiving the Nobel Peace Prize for his work on the first Green Revolution.

However, we can build upon his work of the last 50 to 60 years to come up with solutions we are looking for. And I'm honored to be invited to make a contribution to this end.

Ladies and gentlemen, I stand before you not only in my capacity as the Netherlands minister of agriculture, nature, and food quality, but also as the former chairperson (and your chair already made it clear) of the 17<sup>th</sup> session of the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development.

This year's session of the CSD focused on sustainable agriculture. There was recognition of the fact [that] the achievement of the first Millennium Development Goal – of halving the number of people living in poverty – seems further away than ever. And I already mentioned the challenge of the necessity of feeding 9 billion people in 2050.

At the same time, numerous reports indicate that we use far more of our natural resources than our planet can regenerate; some reports indicate even four times. The competition for the use of natural resources – land, water, and biodiversity – for the production of food, feed, and biofuels is fiercer than ever.

Against this backdrop, delegates from all over the world agreed in May 2009 in New York that a world that is facing multiple crises, including climate change and looming natural-resource scarcity, urgently needs a transition towards a more sustainable and resource-efficient agriculture.

Looking back at a very intensive negotiating process, I am convinced that people realized that old solutions do not any longer fit the new challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century – because, “If you do what you did, you get what you got.” Actually, that was the statement of the minister of environment and tourism of Namibia at one of the preparation meetings of the CSD-17, but she is really right: If you do what you did, you get what you got.

So the most important result of this year's CSD session was a paradigm shift for agriculture. Everyone who is willing to compare the text of the CSD-17 session with the one of the CSD-8 on sustainable agriculture in 2000 will agree that this was realized. Agriculture is now at the heart of sustainable development. Agriculture is no longer seen as a problem in reaching sustainable development; agriculture is now considered an important part of the solution.

Agriculture is at the heart of poverty reduction. In many developing countries, agriculture is the driving force for economic development.

Agriculture is at the heart of sustainable development, and it's crucial for the conservation and sustainable use of our natural resources.

Agriculture is at the heart of the climate change agenda, especially when we look at mitigation and adaptation measures.

Ladies and gentlemen, why is this paradigm shift so important? Because it will fuel a comprehensive approach in finding solutions to these many-fold problems. The ministers in the high-level segment of CSD-17 came up with such an approach in its shared-vision document.

One of the most important elements in that document builds on the work of Dr. Norman Borlaug and aligns the need for a sustainable and homegrown Green Revolution, especially in Africa.

Such a second Green Revolution should be a “revolution” in the most literal meaning of the word. This means calling for a revolution in ideas, a revolution in technologies, and a revolution in agricultural and trade policies and market access, as well as providing the financial means. It calls for new, creative, and innovative thinking. It involves not only governments but all parts of society. It's what the lady said who was speaking before me – it is about partnerships; it is about public and private partnerships.

The economic sector, especially agribusiness, will have to play a prominent role. And that is why I am very happy to share today this platform with important leaders of American agribusiness.

Such a sustainable Green Revolution can happen along a five-track approach: first, increasing our investment in sustainable agriculture; two, creating an enabling environment; three, developing sustainable production and food chains; four, improving market access, especially for developing countries; and five, social safety nets and access to finance, for example, to micro-credit.

From these five areas of actions, one can see the importance of concerted action of governments and other partners in society, especially agribusiness

The Netherlands has, as the second agricultural exporter of the world, a special responsibility. Globalization is an important driver of regional and intercontinental integration of the agri-food system. And in this system, international corporations have been increasing their power and leverage. The sustainability of agriculture can no longer be defined by just looking at fields or farms. Today, agricultural sustainability spans the globe, spans the whole value chain of food and agriculture-related input and output, and it includes outcomes such as nutrition, health, and safety.

This means that agribusiness should be fully involved in agricultural sustainability. Entrepreneurship in the broad agricultural sector is key to sustainable growth. For stability and wealth in a country, the development of large-scale and small-scale agricultural sector is needed. The private sector also, in the Netherlands, is part of that development and should take responsibility for a successful outcome of the process.

Agribusiness is not and will not be on its own. Governments also have a role to play. My government invests in improving agricultural production and strengthening the sustainable agricultural value chain – for example, by providing assistance for the establishment of innovation centers and advisory services; or contributing to research into smart solutions, green gene technology, better use of the plant properties that enable them to grow under difficult conditions, etc.; or encouraging more careful use of phosphates, essential building blocks for plants, to counter the impending phosphate shortage.

We also engage in public-private partnerships where we work with companies, NGOs, and the governments of partner countries on market access by introducing sustainable forms of agricultural-chain management, for instance, in sustainable palm oil or soy. And let me tell you this afternoon, there are still open places at the table for American companies. So this is an invitation.

We also engage in strengthening farmers' organizations such as marketing cooperatives in order to enable them to play a stronger role in the marketplace and to participate in agro-processing or other parts of the value chain. New institutions will also be needed to help farmers better manage their risks, including weather and climate insurance, affordable also to small farmers.

Ladies and gentlemen, part of the paradigm shift is also the full use of the latest scientific knowledge and experience and the opportunities provided by science, research, and technology. They must be linked up with education and extension to be able to disseminate the results of research and to make it applicable on the ground. Science and technology, education, and extension are the pillars for sustainable agricultural and rural development.

This so-called golden triangle of strongly interlinked science and technology, education, and extension is one of the main factors of the success of the Dutch agricultural sector. Linking traditional knowledge, science, and new research and development is pivotal to generate new ideas and technological breakthroughs.

That is exactly the reason why the awarding of the 2009 World Food Prize to Dr. Gebisa Ejeta of Ethiopia is so stimulating. Sorghum is a very important crop for sub-Saharan Africa, and his research into increasing the drought tolerance of the crop and its resistance to a devastating weed means an important contribution to the second Green Revolution I was mentioning earlier on.

Extension services need to be revitalized in many countries and made more representative. In that area, we will have to keep in mind that women are the most important contributors to agricultural production in Africa.

Investments are needed in measures to reverse land degradation, in irrigation, rural roads, and other infrastructure, and in health and education. Satellite technologies can be valuable in monitoring soil conditions and in forecasting weather-related production problems.

However, in addressing the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, there is a strong need to learn from the past. By doing so, we can avoid mistakes while replicating and scaling up effective practices and making them tailor-made to specific circumstances. In shaping our future, we have the opportunity to leapfrog to new technologies, recognizing specific national or regional, even local, circumstances.

I already mentioned the relation of sustainable agriculture and climate change, but the proof of the pudding is in the eating. In December, Copenhagen should be the place to prove that agriculture is at the heart of the climate-change agenda. Globally, the agricultural sector has a significant potential to contribute to mitigation of climate change, as well as to provide adaptation and sustainable-development opportunities, while at the same time improving the lives and incomes of farmers and their families and perhaps delivering alternative or diversified livelihoods.

Some reports suggest that the agricultural sector could be broadly carbon-neutral by 2030 if sustainable-management practices were widely adopted. Globally, the mitigation potential could be realized at a low cost. The challenge here is how to unlock the potential while maintaining a sustained food-production capacity. Mitigation actions to increase soil carbon, for example, can increase resilience against climate-induced stresses and increase productivity in a sustainable way.

Mitigation is one thing; but we must not lose sight of the serious challenges for agricultural production resulting from higher temperatures or drier or wetter climates. Therefore, investments in adaptation are key, including, for example, in more drought- and heat-tolerant crops.

If we want a second Green Revolution, we need to modernize agriculture by combining the best farmer knowledge with the best agricultural science, as well as by promoting good land and water stewardship. While we need to adapt agricultural practices to climate change, there are win-win opportunities for both adaptation and mitigation in agriculture. Other opportunities include improved agricultural advice and training services; ensuring the long-term interest of land managers in sustainable land management; access to credit, including micro-credit in developing countries; and coordinated regional agricultural mitigation programs.

But it is not just what happens down on the farm that echoes the climate-change theme. There is a great deal that can be achieved in terms of the distribution, post-harvest, and consumption of the food we eat. Food waste, from the farm and the seas to the supermarket and the kitchen, is an area that has been underexamined in this regard. And I'm very glad that [Patricia Woertz] mentioned this huge issue.

In conclusion, there is a great scope for advancing the link between sustainable agriculture and climate change. So let us not miss the opportunity for including agriculture and soil carbon in a new climate-change deal in Copenhagen. And let us find enough new, innovative financing mechanisms for adaptation and mitigation incentives in the agricultural sector. Let us prepare for effective action to limit greenhouse-gas emissions in agriculture and at the same time enhance our food security.

In this respect, we have to give due respect to the competing claims between food and fuels. Although easy answers do not exist, the question is whether there is not a need for a process leading us to sustainable production of biofuels. I already mentioned the roundtables for sustainable soy- and palm-oil production; these are good examples of such a process.

Ladies and gentlemen, to come up with adequate answers to the challenges mentioned before, we need on a government level synergy, cooperation, and partnerships within the UN system and between the UN member

states. Furthermore, and as important, involvement of all stakeholders on all levels, and especially civil society, is needed to promote partnerships for sustainable development and to advance integrated management of natural resources.

Such an integrated approach is needed to achieve internationally agreed-upon goals for food security, reducing poverty, and the sustainable use of our ecosystems, particularly in relation to climate change. New and additional resources from private, public, domestic, and international sources are needed, especially for developing countries. Developed countries have a special responsibility in this respect.

Building on the work of the godfather of the first Green Revolution, Dr. Norman Borlaug, the second Green Revolution for sustainable agriculture has to become a reality. Only working with all parties involved, can we make this happen for the benefit of our children and our grandchildren.

Thank you very much.