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Partnering for a Healthy Ecosphere  
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**Introduction**

Thank you, Governor Branstad, for the introduction. And thank you, all, for the invitation and welcome.

**[Starving for Change Slide]**

I'm delighted to help kick off this important conversation about how we safeguard a healthy ecosphere... how we ensure that our ecosphere supports healthy communities... and how we help more people sow the seeds of their own food security and well-being.

Let's start with the facts.

**[Plate Slide]**

Tonight, on this planet, 1 in 8 people will go to bed hungry. That's 925 million people worldwide—nearly 3 times the population of the U.S.

98 percent of these hungry people live in the developing world.

And half of them are from smallholder farming communities. They are farmers without enough food.

In a world that produces more than enough to feed everybody, why do so many go hungry?

And how is it possible that so many people who actually *work in agriculture* are among them?

**[Women working in Field Slide]**

Those are the questions facing us this morning... and I want to offer some answers. Because we don't have to accept this situation as fate. We have the power to change it.

And as we, here, set the table for the World Food Prize Symposium, I'd like to suggest how we, together, can help the world's hungriest people set the table for themselves—how we can mend our broken food system and make it work, more fairly, for everyone.

### **Food Security in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century**

Now, I think most people who follow these issues can agree on the broad parameters of the food security challenge.

Already, about a billion people are hungry—the vast majority in Asia and Africa.

We no longer have global stockpiles of rice and grain—as in past decades. This means that any shock can trigger a calamity.

That's what happened in 2008. Commodity prices spiked, food markets collapsed, riots erupted in 38 countries.

In Haiti, where two-thirds of the population lives on less than a dollar a day, the poorest resorted to eating mud cakes. Yes, *mud cakes*. Made of shortening, salt, and dirt.

And the stresses on our global food system will only grow in the years ahead.

### **[Women in Line – 2050 Stat Slide]**

By 2050, there will likely be 9 billion mouths to feed.

Oxfam estimates that food demand will rise 70 percent... and that prices will soar as resources shrink and as climate change threatens yields.

Put it all together and we have a perfect storm scenario for more hunger.

The world ignores this “tragedy-waiting-to-happen” at our peril.

### **[“Moral Integrity, national security, global health, prosperity” Slide]**

Because food security is a test of our moral integrity... and much more.

Food security is about national security... because hunger drives forced migrations and civil strife.

Food security is about global health... because malnourished people are more susceptible to illness, and less able to provide for their families.

And food security is about our shared prosperity, as well... because global productivity will never reach its full potential as long as people's stomachs are empty.

### **["Boosting Productivity" Slide]**

#### **Boosting Productivity—Necessary, but not Sufficient**

So, what do we do?

Well, here in Iowa—the land of George Washington Carver, Norman Borlaug, and Tom Vilsack—we're right to marvel at the transformational power of agricultural productivity.

We know producing more food, with fewer resources, and smaller environmental impacts is an indispensable variable in the food security equation.

But here's the thing: While boosting productivity is necessary, it is not sufficient.

Because global hunger isn't just about the absence of basic nutrition; it's about the presence of entrenched injustice, and the persistence of structural inequality. Things like market failures... abuses of power... and systematic neglect of human rights.

### **["Oxfam Knows" -- timeline Slide]**

Oxfam knows, because we've seen it up close, on the ground, and in real time. We've worked on global food security and health issues from various perspectives, responding to food crises from Greece in 1942, to Biafra in 1969, to Ethiopia in 1983, to West and Central Africa in 2012... and many tragedies in between.

We've learned the solution has to be more comprehensive than just getting better seeds into the ground.

The way we win the *real* "hunger game" is by rewriting the rules by which it is played.

#### **The GROW Campaign: Five Areas for Action**

And that is the goal of Oxfam's new GROW Campaign for tackling global hunger—our effort to ensure that everyone, everywhere, always has enough food to eat.

It's a global campaign... with 16 other Oxfams around the world.

And here in the U.S., we're focusing on five areas for action—realistic, tangible, achievable steps to help us fix our broken food system and avert the looming crisis.

## **[“Developing Climate-Resilient Agriculture” Slide]**

### ***Developing Climate-Resilient Agriculture***

First is dealing with the effects of global climate change... which sometimes are gradual, and sometimes are sudden... but invariably hit the poorest first and worst.

We’re already seeing the kind of severe weather events that climate experts predicted. And these are only expected to get even worse. This year, for example, heat waves and drought have devastated crops around the world—corn and soybeans in the Midwest; wheat in Russia and rice in India—even as erratic rains in the Sahel have put millions of West Africans, who already live with acute vulnerability and chronic poverty, at further risk.

When harvests fail, global food prices go up—spiking 6 percent this summer from June to July alone.

And the world’s poorest families already spend, on average, more than half their income on food. So when prices go up, they may have to go without, and ensuring good nutrition becomes impossible. Remember those mud pies in Haiti?

It creates a vicious cycle for agricultural families—as malnourished farmers are less able to work, their productivity declines and their meager income disappears.

Just as tragic, poor farmers often lack the means to invest in climate-change-resilient practices, and yet, the fact of *not* adapting to climate change risks making them even poorer.

The forecast is grim.

In South and East Asia, climate change is causing the Himalayan glaciers to melt and threatening the viability of farming across huge swathes of land.

In the South Pacific, whole islands are imperiled as rising sea levels flood communities and poison the soil with salt.

By 2030, droughts and flooding in Africa could increase the price of corn and other grains as much as 120 percent.

But here, too, there are things we can do to grow a better future:

Like developing seeds, soils, and fertilizers that can endure drought and withstand floods and salinity... and working with insurance companies to deliver risk management tools such as weather-based micro insurance, which reduces farmers’ vulnerability, and encourages them to invest in their own resilience. We are already doing this in Ethiopia.

**[“Reforming the Food Aid System” Slide]**

***Reforming the Food Aid System***

Still, we know that disasters can—and will—strike. And, as Americans, we want to help where we can.

Food aid is one way we do—as we have for many years. As many of you know, the United States is the world’s largest food aid contributor. We give some half of the total amount.

And yet, there’s a part of this feel-good story that doesn’t feel good at all: More than 50 percent of taxpayer money for basic food aid grains is wasted on subsidies to U.S. agribusiness and shipping companies.

Fifty percent!

And why is that?

Because U.S. law requires that 75 percent of food aid must be sourced and bagged and processed by U.S. firms... and freighted on U.S.-flagged ships.

*[brief pause]*

Think about that for a minute.

We’re the only industrialized country in the world that doesn’t purchase food aid locally. Instead, we deliver 21<sup>st</sup> century relief by boat, an 18<sup>th</sup> century mode of transportation.

And, meanwhile, the rest of the world provides food aid by purchasing it near the place it’s going—supporting local farmers, stimulating local economies, and helping those in need.

**[Farmers Market Slide]**

What if instead of putting grain on barges and sailing it around the globe, we took a hint from others—and provided our in-country missions with the cash to purchase fresh food in local markets and rush it into famine areas?

We’d help many more people... and we’d get more bang for each taxpayer buck of support... because all of our aid would be going to the people and places that need it most.

Reforming U.S. food aid could save close to half a billion dollars and allow life-saving assistance to reach 17 million more people.

Republican and Democratic administrations have promoted this idea. The U.S. Senate already has approved it ... but the House of Representatives has blocked it.

### **[U.S. Capitol Building Slide]**

We've got to ask ourselves, who is food aid for? Hungry children, or American millers and shippers?

We urge you to join us in contacting your member of Congress and urging them to support this life-saving reform. Ideally it will be included in the Farm Bill which will soon be taken up on the Hill. You can make this happen!

### ***Stop Giveaways to the Corn-Ethanol Industry***

The next area for action is rolling back the subsidies for the corn-ethanol industry.

### **["Stop Giveaways" Corn Stalk going in Gas Tank Slide]**

And I realize a suggestion like that here in Iowa might be about as popular as saying the Butter Cow should be made from margarine.

But the fact is, today, 40 percent of the corn that's grown in this country is going into gas tanks.

Think about that the next time you pull up to the pump. We're basically feeding our cars.

The intentions behind the breaks and incentives for corn-farmers were noble. The thinking was that by boosting our ethanol production, we could reduce our reliance on fossil fuels, lower carbon emissions, and bolster our energy independence. Unfortunately, none of these have proven true.

But even worse, by linking the markets for food and fuel, we've caused corn prices to go up and corn reserves to go down. And the world's poorest people—the families that can least afford it—have paid the price.

That's why Oxfam believes American policymakers should waive the Renewable Fuels Standard, which requires that unleaded gasoline include 10 to 15 percent ethanol.

And from there, they should repeal the standard entirely, and replace it with support for aggressive investments in R&D for next-generation biofuels—biofuels that can sequester carbon out of the atmosphere and fuel our vehicles at the same time.

## **["Reining in Land Grabs" Slide]**

### ***Reining in Land Grabs***

The fourth aspect of our GROW campaign is reining in what we call "land grabs."

Globally, over the past decade, land the size of California, Texas, Arizona, Nevada and New Mexico combined has been sold to investors seeking places to grow food for export... grow crops for biofuels... simply buy-up land for profit... or as a hedge against a future crisis.

That's enough land to grow food for the one billion people who go hungry today.

And I want to be clear: I am not arguing that it is wrong for wealthy companies to invest in agricultural land in poor countries for commercial use.

But in many cases, land sold as "unused" or "undeveloped" is actually being farmed by poor families. These families often are forcibly kicked off the land. Promises of compensation are broken. Women farmers and indigenous communities are especially vulnerable, as they often lack legal rights.

Just as alarming, in many communities, these transactions are not widely publicized. So citizens don't even know that their governments are mortgaging away productive lands to third parties.

This global land rush peaked with the food price spikes of 2008, and it could take off once again.

The world needs to set global norms requiring that local communities are informed about such transactions; are able to give or refuse consent to a project; and are compensated for any loss of land or livelihoods that may result from such a transaction. In too much of the world, a Wild West ethic prevails and the poor are treated with impunity.

*[brief pause]*

## **["Supporting Smallholder Farmers" Slide]**

### ***Supporting Smallholders***

So... I've talked about making agriculture more climate-resilient; about reforming the world's food aid procurement and delivery systems; about making sure food and fuel aren't competitors; and about reining in land grabs.

But there's a final step that may be the most important one of all: Empowering smallholder farmers—and, by extension, empowering the women who harvest 80 percent of Sub-Saharan Africa's food.

This used to be a no-brainer. Four decades ago, agricultural assistance from the World Bank, USAID, and others represented roughly 40 percent of development aid.

But by 2006, it was less than 4 percent. It had withered on the vine.

And this massive divestment has meant that many of the same institutions that spurred vast increases in agricultural productivity have taken their eyes off the prize or disappeared altogether.

It's also meant that far too many of the world's small-scale farmers have never had access to more resilient seeds; more affordable fertilizers; more effective methods of harvest; or more efficient ways to store their produce and move it to market.

### **[Women in the field working Slide]**

Women are at the heart of the challenge—and the head of the solution. Right now they receive less than 10 percent of all the credit directed toward small farmers and 1 percent of the total credit to agriculture.

But if we provided women with the same access to farming resources as we do to men, we could increase agricultural yields by about a quarter, and reduce the number of hungry people worldwide by 100 to 150 million.

You probably know the saying, if you teach a man to fish, you feed him for a lifetime. Well, if we invest in women farmers, then we could feed the world.

### **Call to Action—One Apple at a Time**

*[pause. reset for conclusion.]*

At Oxfam, we think the tenets of our GROW campaign hold tremendous promise for change.

But we also know that a campaign is much bigger than one organization—and that our cause requires engagement from people everywhere... including right here.

### **[Triangle Slide – government, individuals, companies Slide]**

As citizens, we need to push our representatives to be smarter about food security... and to implement policies that make the global food system work for everyone.



As consumers, we need to identify the companies and industry leaders that are doing the right things, elevate them as examples to follow, and support them by purchasing their products.

And as individuals, we need to embrace the role that we can play, in our own kitchens, and at our own tables.

Here's one last example: Roughly a third of the food in the United States gets lost or wasted between farm and fork.

Each year, the amount of food thrown away in rich countries is almost the same as that produced in all of Sub-Saharan Africa.

### **[Apples – 2.7 million thrown away Slide]**

Take apples, for instance. Of all the fresh apples bought in the U.S., UK, Brazil, India, Spain, and the Philippines, one in six ends up in the garbage.

Well, what if, starting with apples, we all took steps to ensure everything we bought got eaten?

What if we stored our apples better... if we ate them in the order they were bought... if we didn't buy more apples when we already had some in the fridge?

One of our studies suggests that by taking such measures in these six countries alone, we could save more than 5.3 billion apples every year. That's enough apples, lined up side-by-side, to stretch around the Earth more than nine times.

My point is: There are things we can do. Each of us, right here, right now.

### **[“We can Grow Better. We can Share Better. We can Live healthier.” Slide]**

*We can grow better*—investing in a new future for agriculture.

*We can share better*—strengthening the food chain between growers and consumers.

*And we can live healthier*—in an ecosphere that promotes and protects human wellbeing.

And where better to start sowing the seeds of a better future than here in Des Moines, at the World Food Prize Symposium?

### **[Concluding slide]**

Thank you, all, very much.