In my first eight weeks as executive director of the World Food Programme, I have been to the front lines of hunger, in Sudan in Darfur and Juba, in Ethiopia and in Chad. I am so pleased to be here today with Dr. Norman Borlaug and the World Food Prize, because this is also the front lines in the fight against hunger.

I thank the World Food Prize for recognizing Dr. Nelson, a man who has taken his passion for farming and canning tomatoes in Morristown, Indiana, and parlayed that into a technology revolution in the storage, packaging and shipment of fruits and vegetables in a way that not only helps farmers, but also those who are hungry in the world.

It is an honor for me to also be with Senator Lugar and Congressman Latham, both working farmers and strong Congressional leaders on food security.

It is also an honor to be here with my former State Department colleagues, the acting-director and nominee to head AID, Henrietta Fore, and Dan Sullivan, a man who has dedicated his professional life to bringing opportunity and freedom to those in the world desperate for even a taste of such things that many of us take for granted. I also thank those here from Food for Peace and the Department of Agriculture. The generosity of the American people feeds almost half of the hungry that are reached through external help each year.

And I want to especially thank Ambassador Ken Quinn and the World Food Prize, and my personal hero--our national treasure--Dr. Norman Borlaug, who has saved hundreds of millions of lives with his revolutionary work on global food security. Maybe that is why you received the Nobel Peace Prize. And the Presidential Medal of Honor. And the Congressional Medal of Honor. Our nation, indeed our world, extend our gratitude to you.
We have a challenge at the World Food Programme--Dr. Borlaug will not rest until every person on earth has enough to eat. This passion has driven him his entire life--and for many decades he has seen the vision of a food secure world. And pursued that vision with unwavering determination. Dr. Borlaug, we must succeed, at least in part, so you may rest!

There are many elements that go into what I call “the anatomy of hunger.” One of them is that much of the world simply lacks the capability to move food from an area of abundance, to an area of deficit. We know that in many nations up to half the food supply is lost due to storage, packaging and transport deficits. We know that in many nations, farmers turn to indestructible crops, sometimes illegal ones such as poppy cultivation in Afghanistan, in large part because they lack the capability to store, package and ship their traditional crops of fresh fruits and vegetables. The breakthrough technologies and methodologies of Dr. Nelson are tearing down these barriers to a food secure world.

Today, we are standing at the threshold of a new era in our work in breaking the cycle of hunger. We are at the halfway mark of the Millennium Development Goal One--of cutting hunger in half by 2015. We have made progress--according to FAO, the world has cut the absolute numbers of malnourished people by more than half in the past three decades. I applaud the many nations, villages, scientists, farmers, business leaders and humanitarian and development leaders that have helped make great gains against hunger. And yet, every five seconds, a child dies from hunger. We must--and can--do better.

At the World Food Programme--the world’s largest humanitarian agency and the frontline hunger agency--we aim to do much more than meet the emergency needs of hunger. The plight of the small-scale African farmer--two-thirds of whom are women--is that she bears almost all of the risk, and receives only a small part of the financial benefit of her labors. She has not had access to the inputs, technologies and markets that have revolutionized the lives of farmers over the past few centuries--from Sweden, to the United States, to Ireland, to Mexico, to Korea, to China and beyond.

My first trip to the field as executive director was to Ethiopia, our second largest operation in the world. WFP now buys one-third of the food we distribute in Ethiopia locally--to benefit small-scale farmers and help to break the cycle of hunger at its root. I met with grain traders, farmers and officials, to explore new and innovative ways of using WFP’s purchasing power and storage and distribution power, to promote development, food security, and supply stability for small-scale African farmers. Today I will travel to Seattle to meet with the Gates Foundation to discuss launching pilots to guide our “Purchasing Power” work around the globe.
In meeting the challenge of hunger on the front lines, we must continually analyze and adjust our strategies in a rapidly changing world. Climate change, soaring demand for biofuels and rising commodity costs, and conflicts over resources, are among the growing challenges in beating hunger.

Biofuel development presents a potential opportunity for energy poor economies and poor farmers--but on the immediate horizon, the world’s most vulnerable are faced with the challenge of rising food costs and the tightest grain markets in memory.

According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, an international consensus body representing the work of hundreds of scientists, yields from rain dependent agriculture could be cut in half by 2020. FAO estimates that 95 percent of agriculture in Sub-Saharan Africa is rain-dependent. Anything even close to a 50 percent reduction in yields would obviously pose huge new challenges for hunger.

And according to the latest assessments coming out of the International Food Aid Conference held in Berlin last month, climatic challenges and biofuels are helping to push us into a post-food surplus era.

These challenges are not only humanitarian, but also involve security and stability. Steve Kagan, a medical doctor who recently entered the US Congress, told me that there is a “seven-meal-gap” between civilization and anarchy--when you or your children miss seven meals in a row, desperation sets in. When whole societies are exposed to hunger for years, it is not surprising if instability follows.

Nevertheless, no person wants to be dependent on another to meet essential needs such as food. Dr. Borlaug, Ambassador Quinn, Senator Lugar, Congressman Latham, I commit to you that we at WFP will work with all of you proactively to help build local capacity so we can hand over food and nutrition sustainability to a nation and its communities. It is my goal, to put WFP out of business in areas of chronic food insecurity--to break this cycle at its root.

The advances in science and technology lauded every year at the World Food Prize put this dream within our grasp. With the help of all the good forces gathered here today I am confident we can succeed.

Thank you very much.