



THE WORLD FOOD PRIZE

DATE

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CONTACT: Justin Cremer, 515-245-3794, jcremer@worldfoodprize.org

World Food Prize Chairman Emeritus John Ruan Dies at Age 96

Noted businessman and philanthropist established World Food Prize Foundation in Des Moines

(DES MOINES, IA, USA) -- World Food Prize Chairman Emeritus John Ruan passed away today in his Des Moines home. He was 96 years old.

One of Iowa's most successful businessmen, Ruan was a well-known philanthropist who strongly believed that Iowa should be seen as the agricultural capital of the world. In 1990, when the future of the World Food Prize was in serious jeopardy after its original sponsor withdrew financial support, Ruan held a fortuitous meeting with World Food Prize founder and fellow small-town Iowan [Norman Borlaug](#). Finding common goals and an instant partnership, Ruan stepped forward to save the World Food Prize with a \$10 million endowment and established the Des Moines-based [World Food Prize Foundation](#).

"I pledge my own energies and resources to these real-life heroes of our day whose work not only touches the soil but also touches the hearts of all mankind," Ruan said at a 1990 press conference. "By assuming sponsorship of the World Food Prize, we can create a most appropriate nurturing environment for it right here in what is often called 'the nation's breadbasket.'"

"Without John Ruan and the family that gave this whole-hearted support from the beginning, there probably wouldn't be a World Food Prize," Dr. Borlaug said in 2006.

In 1994, Ruan created the [World Food Prize Global Youth Institute](#) to foster interest in science and agriculture and increase awareness of critical issues of food security among high school students. Working with Dr. Borlaug, they created the [Borlaug-Ruan International Internship](#) program in 1998. Since its inception, over 125 students have been sent on all-expenses-paid internships at leading research centers in Africa, Asia, Latin America, and the Middle East.

Ruan's son, John Ruan III, has served as the chairman of the World Food Prize since 2004. The Ruan family's vital role in the history of the World Food Prize will be an integral part of the [Norman E. Borlaug Hall of Laureates](#), a museum and convention facility in the heart of downtown Des Moines slated to open in 2012.

"John Ruan had a dream that one day the World Food Prize could draw people from all over the world to Iowa to discuss the most critical issues in global food security," said Ambassador Kenneth Quinn, president of the World Food Prize Foundation. "While we mourn John's passing, it is with the warm feeling that he lived to see his dream come true."

As the former chairman and CEO of the [Ruan Companies](#), Ruan presided over a diversified group of businesses including transportation, commercial banking, financial services, international trading and real estate development. Ruan also played a key role in the development of the Des Moines metropolitan area. In the early 1970's, Ruan built the 36 story [Ruan Center](#) to house the administration of the growing number of Ruan companies. Ruan built the 33-

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story Marriott Hotel in 1980 and the 14-story Two Ruan Center in 1982. He was active in the development and building of Des Moines' extensive skywalk system, the Des Moines Convention Center, and several parking ramps in the downtown area. Ruan also owns [Bankers Trust Company](#), the largest independent bank in Iowa. He also founded the [Iowa Export-Import Trading Company](#), a business involving over 50 nations around the world.

John Ruan on the World Food Prize:

"It is my goal that each year the World Food Prize will gain in stature - not to compete with the Nobel but to bring greater awareness of the critical issue of food security throughout our world." (*1994 Laureate Award Ceremony*)

"I am proud, and I know you are, that together we've been able to bring the World Food Prize to Iowa and share it with the world." (*1996 Laureate Award Ceremony*)

"There is no question in anyone's mind that, while we could get by without automobiles, without television, without radios, without many other things - but the one thing we can't get along without is food, and we think that the World Food Prize spurs people on to do greater things in the development of food." (*1998 Laureate Award Ceremony*)

The World Food Prize was conceived by Dr. Norman E. Borlaug, recipient of the 1970 Nobel Peace Prize. Since 1986, The World Food Prize has honored outstanding individuals who have made vital contributions to improving the quality, quantity or availability of food throughout the world. Previous Laureates have been recognized from Bangladesh, Brazil, China, Denmark, Ethiopia, India, Mexico, Sierra Leone, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, the United Nations and the United States. In 1990, Des Moines businessman and philanthropist John Ruan assumed sponsorship of The Prize and established The World Food Prize Foundation, located in Des Moines, Iowa.