

2019 Sun Hak Peace Prize winner Akinwumi Adesina

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2019 Sun Hak Peace Prize Laureate Akinwumi Adesina

A Champion of Africa's Agricultural Potential

"I am greatly honored to learn of my award of the globally prestigious Sunhak Peace Prize.... Wherever there are wars and conflicts, people go hungry. Wherever there is peace, food security thrives. Let us feed our world with peace." -- Akinwumi Adesina (Twitter) November 24

Dr. Akinwumi Ayodeji Adesina, president of the African Development Bank (AfDB), was selected to receive the 2019 Sunhak Peace Prize for his work to empower the agricultural sector in Africa. The Sunhak Peace Prize Committee said, "Over the past three decades, Dr. Adesina has led an African agricultural revolution and improved the food supply for a hundred million people across the continent."



Akinwumi Adesina was born into a farming family in Ogun State, Nigeria, on February 6, 1960. *"Many of you may not know that I came from a poor background. I attended a village school. My dad and grandfather worked as laborers in other people's farms. My dad could not read and write until he was 15, when an uncle of his took him to Lagos, where he went to Igbobi College and later got a job as a civil servant. That is how I got educated. I wouldn't be getting this award if I wasn't standing on the shoulders of my father who sacrificed so much for me."* -- From his World Food Prize speech

That education includes a degree in Agricultural Economics from Obafemi Awolowo University in Nigeria, and a PhD in Agricultural Economics from Purdue University in the United States.

Dr. Adesina began his career with the West African Rice Development Association (WARDA) in Côte d'Ivoire. He worked as a senior economist at the Rockefeller Foundation, which then appointed him as its representative for southern Africa. He later became Vice President of Policy and Partnerships for the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA), which that Foundation partially funds.

One of Adesina's mentors was Nobel Laureate Dr. Norman Borlaug, whose work to lead a green revolution in Asia and South America is credited with saving a billion people from starvation. "Dr.

Borlaug was a huge inspiration for me. But one moment in particular stands out in our relationship. It was in 2006, as we both walked the streets of New York on our way to the Rockefeller Foundation. He gently put his hand on my shoulder and asked, 'Akin, do you play football?' I wondered why he would ask such a question, out of the blue, given that we were discussing agriculture and how to feed Africa. Unsure of what he was getting at, I politely said, 'Yes, I play soccer'. He then proceeded, now with deliberateness in his voice: 'You see, in soccer, you can never believe you can win unless you score the first goal. Akin, I want you to go out there and score goals for agriculture in Africa. Then Africa will believe it can win with agriculture'. It was such a defining moment for me.... The 'agriculture gospel' is simple: To lift millions of people out of poverty, agriculture must become a business. For in agriculture as a business lies the hope of economic prosperity for Africa."



It was at AGRA that his abilities to push through bold policy and finance initiatives came to the fore. Working with heads of state, finance ministers and bank executives across several African countries, Adesina successfully won some \$4 billion in bank finance commitments toward Africa's agriculture sector and inspired innovative systems by which banks lent even to smallholder farmers. In 2010, Adesina was appointed Minister of Agriculture in his native Nigeria, while United Nations Secretary General, Ban Ki-moon recruited his support for the UN Millennium Development Goals.



As agriculture minister, he stopped 40 years of corruption in the fertilizer sector through implementing an electronic wallet system, based on mobile phones, for the distribution of fertilizer. Within four years his policy had dramatically transformed the livelihoods of 14.5 million farmers while vastly increasing food production across the country. Adesina changed the perception of agriculture in Nigeria from subsistence to viable business, attracting \$5.6 billion in private sector investment commitments.

In 2015, Adesina was elected president of the African Development Bank (AfDB). His strategies continue to reflect his passion to unlock wealth for African economies and lift millions of Africa's poor, including women and youth -- which he has made a particular focus, into Africa's emerging middle class.

