

# [Focusing on Resilience and Food Security at the U.S.-Africa Leaders Summit](#)

## **What is the U.S.-Africa Leaders Summit?**

It's the largest engagement a U.S. president has ever had with African leaders and governments. The [U.S.-Africa Leaders Summit](#) will bring together 50 heads of state, along with a range of U.S. and African civil society and business leaders, to discuss the future of Africa.

## **What issues will the Summit address?**

The summit leader sessions will focus on topics such as trade and investment, peace and regional stability, and good governance. The signature events will address issues such as civil society, women's empowerment, global health, resilience and food security, and wildlife trafficking.

## **What will happen at the resilience and food security event?**

The signature event, *Resilience and Food Security in a Changing Climate*, will focus on the intersection of climate change, food security and resilience while highlighting U.S.-Africa cooperation on initiatives such as the Global Alliance for Climate-Smart Agriculture and Feed the Future.

U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry, U.S. Agency for International Development Administrator Rajiv Shah and U.S. Department of Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack will join African officials, civil society and business leaders, Washington Fellows and members of the U.S. Congress to discuss how climate change impacts food security and resilience in Africa and how key U.S. initiatives support the commitments of African leaders to bolster the resilience of individuals, communities and nations.

## **Why is this issue important to young African leaders?**

The challenges of resilience and food security in a changing climate are of particular concern to counties in Africa where the majority of rural populations depend on farming for their livelihoods and where shocks and stresses like droughts are coming faster and harder. The recent drought emergencies in the Horn of Africa and Sahel underscore this concern.

When people are food secure they learn better, are healthier and more productive, and contribute more to their families and communities. When people know they can withstand the next inevitable shock, they can protect their livelihoods and develop their aspirations.

Building the resilience of the African people requires a comprehensive approach that includes expanding economic opportunities on and off farms, strengthening governance, investing in conflict and disaster risk management and building human capital through health and nutrition investments. It also requires building food security.

To do so, leaders can promote investment in agricultural research and infrastructure development. They can streamline border crossing procedures so food produced in areas of surplus can get to areas of need. They can encourage the next generation to pursue careers in agricultural and environmental science and technology.

Leaders can build the capacity of households and communities to adapt to climate shocks and other environmental, social, and economic disturbances to ensure a food secure and prosperous future for

all Africans.

### Photo credit: C. Schubert

## **“What was the outcome of the Resilience and Food Security in a Changing Climate Signature Event at the U.S.-Africa Leaders Summit?”**

Joining [U.S. Agency for International Development](#) (USAID) Administrator Rajiv Shah at the U.S. Africa Leaders Summit, Judith Rodin, president of the Rockefeller Foundation, announced the \$100 million [Global Resilience Partnership](#), a new model for solving the complex and interrelated challenges of the 21st century such as persistent and often extreme poverty, food insecurity and climate shocks. The partnership will address chronic vulnerabilities and enable communities and institutions to rebound quickly and effectively after environmental, social and economic disturbances.

Administrator Shah also announced that more than 1,300 fellowships and training opportunities in agriculture and nutrition will be available to young Africans. The training will contribute to climate-smart agriculture and reduce global hunger and poverty, he said. He urged African governments to encourage their youth to consider careers in agriculture and noted that U.S. and African leaders and companies have collectively committed more than \$8 billion in agriculture investments in Africa.

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## **Latest World Food Prize Laureate on Leadership**

Sanjaya Rajaram believes that leadership can come with time.

Rajaram, who was just named the 2014 World Food Prize Laureate, led for decades the wheat-breeding program at the International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center (CIMMYT) in Mexico.

As a young scientist at CIMMYT, “it took me some time before I could develop some of the skills in leadership,” said the successful Indian-born researcher. “I was able to recognize very early that there has to be a good balance in productivity and in people’s aspirations.”

“For me, the central core of leadership is team building, getting the best people to work together and recognizing each individual for their contribution to a common goal,” Rajaram said.

Rajaram claims the noted plant pathologist, World Food Prize founder and Nobel Peace Prize Laureate Norman Borlaug as his main inspiration as a scientist and as a leader. He was highly influenced by fellow India native M.S. Swaminathan, who taught him about genetics, and by other agricultural researchers. “I basically heard these people talk about their philosophies, and that was enough for me,” he said.

After his time at CIMMYT, Rajaram became director of the International Center for Agricultural

Research in the Dry Areas (ICARDA), part of the same international research consortium that includes CIMMYT. He then moved to a private plant-breeding program in Mexico working on wheat and barley.

“Dr. Rajaram has helped to feed millions of people across the world through his lifetime of research and innovation,” U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry said.

Rajaram noted that scientists of all ages who work to improve the quality and quantity of food accept that their work will have both successes and failures. “There are failures in most innovations. Indeed, in agricultural innovations, and especially in plant breeding, there are more failures than success,” he said.

Speaking of young people considering taking up agriculture as a career, Rajaram said: “I believe today’s youth would be very much interested in agriculture as a career if they understood the importance of food, nutrition, health, the environment and related issues.”

“We need leaders to talk to youth in language they can understand,” Rajaram said.

**Photo credit: World Food Prize**

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