

41

Norman Borlaug *Top 100 Americans*

Norman Ernest Borlaug (March 25, 1914 – September 12, 2009) was an American biologist, humanitarian and Nobel laureate who has been called "the father of the Green Revolution", "agriculture's greatest spokesperson" and "The Man Who Saved A Billion Lives". He is one of seven people to have won the Nobel Peace Prize, the Presidential Medal of Freedom and the Congressional Gold Medal and was also awarded the Padma Vibhushan, India's second highest civilian honor.

Borlaug received his B.Sc. Biology 1937 and Ph.D. in plant pathology and genetics from the University of Minnesota in 1942. He took up an agricultural research position in Mexico, where he developed semi-dwarf, high-yield, disease-resistant wheat varieties.

During the mid-20th century, Borlaug led the introduction of these high-yielding varieties combined with modern agricultural production techniques to Mexico, Pakistan, and India. As a result, Mexico became a net exporter of wheat by 1963. Between 1965 and 1970, wheat yields nearly doubled in Pakistan and India, greatly improving the food security in those nations. These collective increases in yield have been labeled the Green Revolution, and Borlaug is often credited with saving over a billion people worldwide from starvation. He was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1970 in recognition of his contributions to world peace through increasing food supply.

Later in his life, he helped apply these methods of increasing food production to Asia and Africa.

For his contributions to the world food supply, Borlaug was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1970. Norwegian officials notified his wife in Mexico City at 4:00 am, but Borlaug had already left for the test fields in the Toluca valley, about 40 miles (65 km) west of Mexico City. A chauffeur took her to the fields to inform her husband. According to his daughter, Jeanie Laube, "My mom said, 'You won the Nobel Peace Prize,' and he said, 'No, I haven't', ... It took some convincing ... He thought the whole thing was a hoax". He was awarded the prize on December 10. In his Nobel Lecture the following day, he speculated on his award: "When the Nobel Peace Prize Committee designated me the recipient of the 1970 award for my contribution to the 'green revolution', they were in effect, I believe, selecting an individual to symbolize the vital role of agriculture and food production in a world that is hungry, both for bread and for peace". His speech repeatedly presented improvements in food production within a sober understanding of the context of population. "The green revolution has won a temporary success in man's war against hunger and deprivation; it has given man a breathing space. If fully implemented, the revolution can provide sufficient food for sustenance during the next three decades. But the frightening power of human reproduction must also be curbed; otherwise the success of the green revolution will be ephemeral only. Most people still fail to comprehend the magnitude and menace of the "Population Monster"...Since man is potentially a rational being, however, I am confident that within the next two decades he will recognize the self-destructive course he steers along the road of irresponsible population growth..."