

Senate Agriculture Committee Chairman Pat Roberts, R-Kan.
Acceptance of the Gene White Lifetime Achievement Award
Global Child Nutrition Foundation
March 7, 2018
Washington, DC

It is an honor to be with you all today, and it is my great privilege to accept the Gene White Lifetime Achievement Award for Child Nutrition.

I've had the pleasure of attending this event over the years, and it is always inspirational to hear from those who have made it their mission to end hunger across the globe, a mission that is ongoing.

I also want to thank the very impressive speakers who took the time to be here today. Some I've known longer than others. Some even show up at my house over the holidays.

These individuals have been on the front lines of the battle to end hunger, and it has been a privilege to work with them over the years.

"Feeding a troubled and hungry world..." It is a phrase I've said often over the years, my staff would say at least a thousand times. It has not lost its meaning.

As the Chairman of the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry, I represent the farmers, ranchers, and growers who are responsible for feeding that troubled and hungry world.

I take their job very seriously. Our producers play a critical role in ensuring a safe and reliable food supply. It has always been that way.

In 1953, a farmer by the name of Peter O'Brien, from Cheyenne County, Kansas, had the idea that U.S. farmers could give aid to other countries around the world in the form of food.

With the support of Kansas Senators Andy Schoeppel and Frank Carlson – my former boss, and ultimately President Eisenhower, the Food for Peace program, commonly referred to as P.L. 480, was signed into law.

More than six decades later Food for Peace provides aid to countries in need all over in the world.

And everyone in this room is familiar with the McGovern-Dole, or Dole-McGovern, International Food for Education and Child Nutrition Program.

My good friend and mentor Bob Dole, a former recipient of the Gene White Lifetime Achievement Award, understood that food security is about more than just food.

Through McGovern-Dole, young students around the world, especially young women, have not only received a school meal, but the opportunity to receive an education. Schools have improved

infrastructure, teachers have received additional training, and entire communities have banded around the mission of bettering nutrition and literacy.

McGovern-Dole and Food for Peace, along with programs like Food for Progress, and Farmer to Farmer, are just a few examples of how U.S. producers have stepped up to meet the challenge of food security.

Many of these programs and policies have evolved over the years through Farm Bills.

The Senate Agriculture Committee is currently in the process of crafting a new Farm Bill.

It is our responsibility to ensure that these programs are supported and strengthened.

We must also look for creative and new ways to allow our producers and other stakeholders to do what they do best—feed people.

In a time when we hear a great deal about “gridlock” and “partisanship,” I am fortunate to lead a Committee that has proven to be the exception.

Ranking Member Debbie Stabenow and I have a long history of overcoming serious challenges to get things done.

Before this Farm Bill, we partnered during the last Congress to work on the reauthorization of the Child Nutrition programs. Senator Stabenow and I put together a good, bipartisan bill that passed out of the Committee unanimously, but unfortunately hit a few too many roadblocks as we worked toward enactment.

These programs help prepare our children to succeed in school, ensure our nation’s security, and provide assistance to the vulnerable among us who cannot help themselves.

Our school meal programs set an example around the world and highlight the importance in supporting education for all children.

Senator Stabenow and I also worked together on the Farm Bill in the Senate in 2012. One of our efforts came to fruition as the Foundation for Food and Agriculture Research, which was included in the 2014 Farm Bill.

Agricultural research is key in moving the ball forward as it relates to food security. Senator Stabenow and I recognized early that we needed to think outside the box as it relates to incentivizing investment in research.

The Foundation has been tasked with the charge of bold and innovative research. It leverages federal investment and furthers the advancements that were made early in the history of U.S. agriculture, many of which occurred through the Department of Agriculture, land-grant universities, commodity organizations, NGOs and PVOs.

In the new Farm Bill, we must continue to build upon that innovation and find new ways to strengthen agricultural research, not just at home, but abroad as well.

We must constantly be pursuing the next “Green Revolution.”

Julie, it’s an honor to have you here today. Your grandfather would be very proud of the work you have continued on his behalf.

Around the world we see increasing challenges emerge in food security, and Mother Nature is certainly one of them. If we don’t equip producers with tools like biotechnology, and other plant breeding innovations, the risk of food insecurity, and even famine, will increase dramatically.

Show me a nation that cannot feed itself, and I’ll show you a nation in chaos. There is no greater threat to national security, than food security.

I am incredibly proud of the role that U.S. agriculture plays in “feeding a troubled and hungry world”.

Our work is certainly not done. I thank you all for your commitment, and I look forward to continuing to work with you all on this crucial effort.