



Photo: Participants during the World Food Prize Foundation – Kenya Youth Institute.

## Empowering Kenya's Youth to Engage in World Food Prize Foundation Initiatives

Hundreds of students and teachers gathered at the Kenya Agricultural and Livestock Research Organization (KALRO) Headquarters in Nairobi on 19th July 2025 for the opening of a transformative two-day **Food Security Youth Conference**. This dynamic event aimed to spark innovation among young minds, equipping them to tackle some of the biggest challenges facing agriculture and food systems in Kenya and beyond.

Hosted by KALRO in partnership with the **World Food Prize Foundation – Kenya Youth Institute (WFPPF-KYI)**, the conference brought together top high school innovators from across the country. Alongside educators, researchers, and development partners, the students explored solutions to food insecurity, climate change, and malnutrition—pressing issues that demand youthful creativity and energy.

*“The World Food Prize Foundation has worked with youth for over 30 years, providing tools and opportunities for them to explore pathways where they can make an impact in agriculture and food systems. We want students to leave this conference with greater confidence and strengthened skills in research and innovation,”* said **Jon Wogman**, Director of Global Youth Programs and Partnerships at the Foundation.

### Building Bridges Between Youth and Science

The **International Potato Center (CIP)**, through its CGIAR **Policy Innovations Science Program**, played a pivotal role in supporting

this year's event. By sponsoring students and contributing to the participant selection process, CIP reaffirmed its commitment to bridging the gap between science and youth engagement in agriculture.

Speaking during the conference, **Leonard Kirui** from **CIP** remarked:

*“This is a monumental moment for CIP as we nurture youth participation in the food security and nutrition agenda. CIP is proud to be among the organizations opening pathways for young scientists to engage meaningfully in transforming food systems.”*

Other supporting organizations included the International Livestock Research Institute (**ILRI**), **Concern Worldwide**, and Kenya Commercial Bank (**KCB**) — together underscoring the urgency of engaging youth in shaping the future of agriculture.

### Inspiring Kenya's Next Generation of Food Security Champions

This year's conference revolved around **student-led innovation**, with 69 school-based projects presented after months of research and development. Judges evaluated the projects for creativity, scientific rigor, and real-world potential. Two outstanding students will ultimately represent Kenya at the prestigious **Global Youth Institute in Iowa, USA**, where they will join peers from around the world to contribute to global food policy conversations.

Workshops during the event helped students sharpen their research, communication, and presentation skills. Many participants were attending the national science forum for the first time, yet their energy and innovation left a lasting impression.

*“This program gives young people the tools and confidence to become tomorrow’s hunger fighters—scientists, policymakers, advocates, and farmers,”* emphasized **Jan Low**, 2016 World Food Prize Laureate and a strong advocate for youth engagement in food systems.

### **CIP and the World Food Prize Foundation: A Lasting Partnership**

This youth-focused initiative reflects CIP’s enduring partnership with the **World Food Prize Foundation**, a collaboration that continues to inspire young innovators and amplify scientific breakthroughs around the world.

In 2016, CIP scientists **Dr. Jan Low**, **Dr. Maria Andrade**, and **Dr. Robert Mwanga** were awarded the prestigious *World Food Prize* for their groundbreaking work on biofortifying Orange-Fleshed Sweetpotato (OFSP). This innovation has been instrumental in addressing Vitamin A deficiency among vulnerable populations and has transformed diets across Africa and Asia.

CIP has also served as a hub for nurturing young talent through programs like the *Borlaug-Ruan International Internship Program*, which provides mentorship to aspiring agricultural scientists and immerses them in cutting-edge research. By hosting interns and engaging with global youth initiatives, CIP creates opportunities for the next generation of leaders to gain hands-on experience in solving real-world food security challenges.

Furthermore, CIP has consistently contributed to global dialogues on food systems innovation. Its active participation in platforms such as the *Borlaug Dialogue* and *DialogueNEXT* underscores its commitment to sharing critical insights and innovations with a worldwide audience.

Most recently, *Dr. Hugo Campos*, CIP’s Deputy Director General, was recognized as a *2025 Top Agri-Food Pioneer* by the World Food Prize Foundation. This honor highlights CIP’s leadership in science-driven solutions and reinforces its dedication to empowering youth and communities to build more sustainable and resilient food systems.

By investing in youth and fostering innovation through strategic partnerships like the World Food Prize Foundation, CIP is paving the way for a new generation of leaders to transform food systems and secure a healthier, more sustainable future for all.

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