



15 June 2013

The 30th McDougall Memorial Lecture

By Dr Amartya Sen

Introductory Remarks

Your Excellency, Mohammad Asif Rahimi, Minister for Agriculture of Afghanistan,
Chairperson of the Conference

Your Excellency Mr Luc Guyau, Independent Chairperson of the Council

Excellencies, Ministers from Member countries,

Ambassadors – Permanent Representatives,

Colleagues, Ladies and gentlemen.

Thank you all for being here for the 30th McDougall Memorial Lecture.

This annual lecture series is named for Frank Lidgett McDougall, an Australian economist whose writings on food production and distribution set in motion a series of events that, ultimately, led world leaders to found the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations.

This year's McDougall Lecture will be delivered by someone who has made a groundbreaking contribution to the way we understand and fight hunger and poverty.

Dr Amartya Sen, an Indian economist and philosopher and winner of the 1988 Nobel Prize for economics hardly needs an introduction.



In 1981, Dr Sen wrote the book, *Poverty and Famines: An Essay on Entitlement and Deprivation*.

Sen shifted attention away from the traditional focus on food production to access to food, recognizing that the main reason for hunger was not the lack of food anymore, but insufficient access to food.

Shifting from the traditional view of only a lack of production, Sen looked at inequalities in the mechanisms governing the distribution of food.

He developed what is known as the “entitlement approach” to analyze and address chronic hunger, looking at the ability of people to access food through the customary means available to society, such as production, trade, and state-sponsored entitlements.

He looked at hunger not through the lens of charity, but with a rights-based approach. After all, ensuring that everyone has enough food to live healthy lives is not a favor.

The shift he proposed from production to access and from charity to a rights-based approach has transformed the way we fight hunger and poverty today.

Dr. Sen also helped to create the UN’s Human Development Index, proposing that the basic idea that development should be to promote the richness of human life and not the richness of the economy.

The different lenses that Dr Sen offered to understand and respond to poverty and hunger have not always been welcome. I am happy that this is changing now.

We have much to learn from Professor Sen in our efforts to end poverty, food insecurity and malnutrition around the world.

Professor Sen, I am honored to welcome you to FAO.