

ROOTS OF PEACE FOUNDER WINS WORLD FOOD PRIZE FOR CONTRIBUTIONS CULTIVATING PEACE THROUGH AGRICULTURE IN WAR-TORN LANDS

"How Heidi Kühn's Roots of Peace is changing lives through agriculture"

SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA, UNITED STATES, May 11, 2023 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The World Food Prize Foundation has announced that the 2023 World Food Prize Laureate is Heidi Kühn, CEO and Founder of Roots of Peace, who has dedicated more than 25 years to restoring agriculture in former conflict zones. The foundation has recognized Kühn for her farmer-focused development model that revitalizes farmland, food security, livelihoods, and resilience after devastating conflict.

Kühn founded the nonprofit Roots of Peace in 1997 to replace the remnants of war with farmland. The organization also trains farmers in modern agricultural practices, from planting and harvesting to marketing through international exports. The Selection Committee of the World Food Prize Foundation recognized Kühn's work for showing the world the vital role agriculture must have in the resilient recovery from conflict and the restoration of peace.

Kühn's work has supported de-mining partners in Afghanistan, Angola, Azerbaijan, Cambodia, Croatia, Israel, Iraq, Palestinian areas, Guatemala and Vietnam, allowing local farmers safe access to irrigation canals and arable land for cultivation. Roots of Peace has developed a pioneering market-led model that carries out initial agricultural assessments to identify viable opportunities for smallholder farmers before working with partners to clear mines so farmers can make productive use of the land.



Heidi Kuhn, CEO, Roots of Peace - Photo Peter Zabelin

In Afghanistan alone, Roots of Peace has helped generate high-value exports of cherries, pomegranates, almonds, saffron, and other crops worth an estimated \$491 million since 2010, supporting rural livelihoods and economic recovery. Roots of Peace has helped establish fruit orchards as well as nut, seed, and spice production on former battlefields.

Kühn's programs in Afghanistan have received support from USAID and the UN Development Program (UNDP). Kühn later used her close relationship with Afghan farmers to support efforts to eradicate polio, developing a scheme to offer rural families chickens or beehives as encouragement to receive vaccines.



Heidi Kühn and her son Christian in Quang Tri, Vietnam with MAG (Mines Advisory Group) where they detonated landmines from The Vietnam War.

Kühn, a mother of four and cancer survivor, began her work to rebuild agriculture in post-conflict regions in Croatia, where she partnered with Croatian-American wine producer Mike Grgich of Grgich Hills Estate. With Grgich's support, Kühn helped to facilitate the removal of mines left from the War of Independence (1991-1995) and re-establish vineyards.

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It is with immense gratitude and a sense of responsibility that I humbly accept the World Food Prize on behalf of Roots of Peace and the farming families of war-torn countries across the world”

Heidi Kuhn, CEO, Roots of Peace

Around 60 million people in almost 70 countries and territories continue to live at risk of landmines, according to the United Nations, including rural communities where farming is the main source of livelihood and income. In Quang Tri Province in Vietnam, for instance, where many people depend on farming, much of the land remains contaminated by remnants of war as part of the former Demilitarized Zone. Kühn identified black pepper production as a traditional, high-value crop that could be

re-established in the area. By partnering with Mines Advisory Group to clear the land of explosives and helping plant more than one million pepper trees, she enabled farmers to export more than 50 metric tons of high-grade black pepper to new markets in the U.S.

“It is with immense gratitude and a sense of responsibility that I humbly accept the World Food Prize this year on behalf of Roots of Peace and the farming families of war-torn countries across

the world," said Kühn, who was visiting minefields in Azerbaijan when the announcement was made. "This prestigious award underscores the importance of our mission to revitalize agriculture in post-conflict areas, as a means of healing both the land and its people. As we rejoice in this recognition, we must not forget the millions of families affected by the tragedies of war, who seek hope, stability, and sustenance through the nurturing power of agriculture."

The announcement of Kühn's award was made by U.S. Ambassador Terry Branstad, World Food Prize Foundation President, at the National Academy of Sciences in Washington, D.C. The event featured remarks by U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken, U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Thomas Vilsack, and World Food Prize Foundation Chief Operating Officer Mashal Husain.

"Heidi Khün embodies the commitment of Dr. Norman Borlaug, who founded the World Food Prize, to cultivate peace through agriculture. I am honored to announce her as the 2023 Laureate for her work to provide a way forward for more than a million people living in war-torn regions around the world." Ambassador Branstad said.

Adriana Aristizabal
iVoice Communications
+1 917-833-0103
adriana@ivoice.agency

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