

**L u n c h ~ N ~ L e a r n   S E M I N A R**



**THE NATIONAL COALITION FOR  
FOOD & AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH**

**Program:**

**THE NEXT 40 YEARS**  
*“The Challenge of Feeding 9.6 Billion”*

September 28, 2012

# PROGRAM

## *Welcome and Introduction*

DAVID SCHMIDT  
NATIONAL C-FAR REPRESENTATIVE

## *Distinguished Speaker*

DR. ROBERT L. THOMPSON  
VISITING SCHOLAR, JOHNS HOPKINS UNIVERSITY'S  
PAUL H. NITZE SCHOOL OF ADVANCED INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

## *Open Forum*

## *Closing*

DAVID SCHMIDT

NATIONAL C-FAR IS a nonprofit, nonpartisan, consensus-based and customer-led coalition that brings food, agriculture, nutrition, conservation and natural resource stakeholders together with the food and agriculture research and extension community, serving as a forum and a unified voice in support of sustaining and increasing public investment at the national level in food and agricultural research, extension, and education. For additional information, go to [www.ncfar.org](http://www.ncfar.org); or contact Tom Van Arsdall, Executive Director, at [tom@vanarsdall.com](mailto:tom@vanarsdall.com).

## **ABSTRACT**

With the projected growth in population, the world's farmers are being asked to produce enough more food to feed the equivalent of two more Chinas in the next 40 years. Add in changes in diet from growing affluence and urbanization and some use of agricultural commodities as feedstocks in producing biofuels, and world agricultural production could need to double by mid-century. Where can this production come from? We could double the number of acres of land in crop production worldwide, but only at the cost of massive destruction of forests, with accompanying loss of wildlife habitat, biodiversity and carbon sequestration capacity—all unacceptable environmental outcomes. The only sustainable future is one in which we close to double the average productivity of land already in production worldwide. Moreover, the world's farmers will need to more than double—perhaps triple—the average productivity of the fresh water they use as growing cities outbid them for available water. On top of these challenges, all agro-ecosystems will be shifting with climate change. It is going to take a significant increase in public and private investments in adaptive agricultural research just to sustain present productivity levels, not to mention achieve the needed doubling or more in land and water productivity. Malthus has been wrong for more than two centuries because he underestimated the power of agricultural research to increase productivity in agriculture faster than the demand for food has grown. There is no more excuse for him to be right in the 21<sup>st</sup> century than he was in the 19<sup>th</sup> or 20<sup>th</sup>, but he will continue to be wrong only if we redouble our commitment to investments in agricultural research.

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## **SPEAKER BIOGRAPHY**

**ROBERT L. THOMPSON, Ph.D.** is a Visiting Scholar at Johns Hopkins University's Paul H. Nitze School of Advanced International Studies in Washington, DC. He is Professor Emeritus at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign where he held the Gardner Endowed Chair in Agricultural Policy. He is also Senior Fellow, global agricultural development and food security, with the Chicago Council on Global Affairs. Previously Dr. Thompson served as Director of Rural Development and Senior Advisor for Agricultural Trade Policy at the World Bank (1998-2002); President and CEO of Winrock International Institute for Agricultural Development (1993-98); Dean of Agriculture (1987-93) and Professor of Agricultural Economics (1974-93) at Purdue University; Assistant Secretary for Economics at the U.S. Department of Agriculture (1985-87) and Senior Staff Economist for Food and Agriculture at the President's Council of Economic Advisers (1983-85). Thompson received his B.S. from Cornell University and his M.S. and Ph.D. from Purdue University. Raised on a small family dairy farm in northern New York State, Dr. Thompson has extensive international experience and has lectured, consulted, or conducted research in more than 90 countries worldwide, including extended periods in Denmark, Laos, and Brazil.

## **SEMINAR SERIES DESCRIPTION**

National C-FAR's Seminar Series regularly presents leading-edge researchers to address pressing issues confronting the public and Congress. National C-FAR and the Seminar Series serve as a resource to policymakers and all congressional staff.

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