

## Dr Sanjaya Rajaram

The honorary degree of Doctor of Science in Agriculture was conferred upon Sanjaya Rajaram by the Pro-Chancellor, Mr Kevin McCann AM at a Faculty of Agriculture and Environment graduation at 2.00pm on 9 December 2017.

### Citation

Pro-Chancellor, it gives me great pleasure to present Dr Sanjaya Rajaram, an alumnus of this University, to you for admission to the degree of Doctor of Science in Agriculture (*honoris causa*) in recognition of his exceptional achievements and eminence in the fields of international agriculture and wheat breeding, and with particularly important food security benefits to the developing world.

Dr Rajaram was born in 1943 near a small farming village in the state of Uttar Pradesh in northeastern India. He completed his Bachelor of Science in Agriculture, and Masters in Wheat Breeding and Genetics in India by 1964. In 1965 he came to Australia and studied wheat breeding and genetics for his PhD at the University of Sydney, supported by a scholarship provided by the Rotary Club of Narrabri. He was located at the University's Plant Breeding Institute in Narrabri, and his supervisors were Professor IA Watson and Nicholas Derera. He was awarded the PhD degree in 1968.

He then returned to India as a Rockefeller Foundation Postdoctoral Fellow at the Indian Agricultural Research Institute in New Delhi. During this time Professor Watson recommended Dr Rajaram to the future Nobel Peace Prize Laureate Dr Norman Borlaug, who was then Wheat Director at the International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center (CIMMYT) in Mexico – and this set in motion Dr Rajaram's distinguished scientific career in wheat research.

During his time at CIMMYT, Dr Rajaram held various positions in the Wheat Program, from Postdoctoral Fellow, leadership of the CIMMYT Bread Wheat Breeding Program from 1972 on Dr Borlaug's retirement, culminating in his appointment as Director of the CIMMYT Wheat Program in 1996, a position he held until 2003. Dr Rajaram then transferred to the International Centre for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas then in Syria, where he was a senior advisor and Director of Integrated Gene Management until 2008. Since retirement in 2008, Dr Rajaram has continued breeding wheat in Mexico through his own company, which co-operates with wheat researchers around the world, including those at the University of Sydney.

After Dr Borlaug's work led to the ushering in of the Green Revolution, Dr Rajaram focused on continuing research to raise wheat's yield potential or ceiling, and building in drought resistance, pest and disease resistance or tolerance, and improving grain and flour quality. Dr Rajaram's varieties helped sustain the momentum of the Green Revolution through the 1980's and 1990's until the beginning of the current millennium. Through his sustained efforts, improved wheat varieties were developed which contributed to yield increases and farmers' prosperity. This was the "golden age" of wheat breeding and production. Dr Rajaram had an extraordinary ability to visually identify and select wheats possessing a wide range of desired characteristics that increased global wheat yield potential by 20 to 25 percent.

Dr Rajaram's leadership and commitment to the improvement of bread wheat resulted in the prodigious release of over 500 varieties in the last three decades. This is a unique achievement – more than any breeder of any plant species, and one that is unlikely to be matched. These varieties have been grown in over 50 countries on six continents and are widely adopted by both small and large-scale farmers. These varieties have increased yield potential, wide adaptation and resistance to important diseases and are grown on more than 60 million hectares worldwide. Importantly, all these varieties were developed as part of International Public Goods, and researchers, farmers and seed producers everywhere have free access to them.

Dr Rajaram has many honours. He is a Fellow of Indian National Academy of Sciences and the American Association for the Advancement of Science. He was a Friendship Awardee of the People's Republic of China, and has a Derek Tribe Award from the Crawford Fund in Canberra. He has both the Monsanto Distinguished Career, and Presidential Awards from the Crop Science Society of America.

In addition, two globally significant prizes have been presented to Dr Rajaram; the Rank Prize for Nutrition in 1998, and the World Food Prize in 2014. The World Food Prize is recognised as the "Nobel Prize" for Food and Agriculture.

Pro-Chancellor, I present Dr Sanjaya Rajaram for admission to the degree of Doctor of Science in Agriculture (*honoris causa*) and I invite you to confer the degree upon him.