



## Roberto Lenton named founding director of Water for Food Institute

Roberto Lenton, one of the world's foremost experts in water management and development, has been named to lead the Robert B. Daugherty Water for Food Institute at the University of Nebraska, NU President James B. Milliken announced today. Lenton will also hold an appointment as Professor of Biological Systems Engineering at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

"Roberto Lenton is the ideal person to lead the Daugherty Institute as its founding director," Milliken said. "His experience in water management, food security, sustainable agriculture and responsible use of resources is exceptional. As important, he shares our vision for the institute and its potential to have an impact on the world. We are fortunate to have been able to attract someone of this caliber and international reputation to the University of Nebraska. He will help us quickly establish the Daugherty Institute as a global leader in research, education and policy related to water for food."



Lenton currently serves as chairperson of the independent World Bank Inspection Panel, a vice presidential-level position within the World Bank organization. The Panel was established in 1993 to increase accountability of the World Bank and to improve compliance; he has served as chair since 2009. Lenton's appointment as executive director of the Daugherty Institute will begin February 1, 2012, after his current role as Chair of the Inspection Panel comes to an end. He will remain a member of the panel until August 2012.

Lenton said, "The Robert B. Daugherty Water for Food Institute has so much to build on: its base at a leading land grant university with a strong tradition of practical application of scientific knowledge; its location in the state of Nebraska, known as an innovator of good policies and practices in agricultural water management; the enormous talent of its faculty and research staff who have a long track record of addressing water and food security issues from a variety of disciplinary perspectives; its strong convening power, as illustrated by the annual Water for Food Conferences that have begun to shape the debate on this critical issue of our time; and the very generous founding gift from the Robert B. Daugherty Foundation that will enable the Institute to get off to a rapid start." He added, "I am very excited by the opportunity to build on these strong foundations and enable the Institute to fulfill its commitment to help the world use its limited freshwater resources effectively and ensure food security for current and future generations."

Among Lenton's most important experiences was helping establish and then serving as Director General of the **International Water Management Institute** in Sri Lanka from 1987 to 1994. Under Lenton's leadership, IWMI grew from a small project-based organization to a major institute employing more than 300 people in 10 countries with an annual budget of over \$10 million.

Jeff Raikes, CEO of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and a member of the Board of Directors of the Daugherty Institute, said, "Dr. Lenton is one of the most widely recognized leaders in the world in water circles. His early work in South Asia laid the foundation for the International Water Management Institute, which now has a significant global presence and impact. What he brought to IWMI — a highly effective strategic planning process, a sharply focused research agenda and a deep knowledge of the most important issues and players throughout the world — are also key ingredients in the success of the Daugherty Institute. I don't believe we could have found a more qualified and respected founding director."

Dr. M S Swaminathan of Chennai, India, who is known as the "Father of the Green Revolution in India" and was the first recipient of the World Food Prize, has known Dr. Lenton for more than 30 years. He cited Lenton's "depth of knowledge on issues relating to sustainable water security and the width of his understanding of the social and scientific dimensions of water management. He is undoubtedly one of the most eminent leaders in the area of water and food security. It is therefore appropriate that he is joining as the Founder Director of the Robert B. Daugherty Water for Food Institute of the University of Nebraska. I am confident that under his leadership this Institute will become the centre of origin of important findings in the field of water for food."

Lenton has also been director of the United Nations Development Programme's Sustainable Energy and Environment Division in New York, where he worked closely with colleagues at partner institutions to help launch the Global Water Partnership, the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment and the Poverty and Environment Programme. His responsibilities in the Division included agriculture and food security, natural resources management, sustainable energy, drought and desertification, and capacity building for sustainable development. Earlier, he was Program Officer in the Rural Poverty and Resources program with the Ford Foundation in New Delhi and New York, and an assistant professor at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. He was also senior advisor on water at the Earth Institute at Columbia University.

A citizen of Argentina with degrees from the University of Buenos Aires and MIT, Lenton is a co-author of *Applied Water Resources Systems*, and of *Health, Dignity and Development: What will it take?*—the final report of the UN Millennium Project Task Force on Water and Sanitation, which he co-chaired. Following the release of this report

### The Water for Food Institute

is a research, education and policy analysis institute committed to helping the world efficiently use its limited freshwater resources, with particular focus on ensuring the food supply for current and future generations.

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in 2005, he was appointed Chair of the Geneva-based Water Supply and Sanitation Collaborative Council.

The Daugherty Water for Food Institute was established in 2010 through a \$50 million founding gift from the Robert B. Daugherty Charitable Foundation. Daugherty, founder of Valmont Industries and a pioneer in the irrigation industry, died in November, 2010. He was recently honored with the 2011 Regents Medal, the University's highest award. The institute is a university-wide, interdisciplinary research, education and policy analysis center dedicated to the efficient use of the world's freshwater resources to feed a growing global population.

In addition to hosting the annual Water for Food conference, which this year drew more than 450 participants from across the globe, the Daugherty Institute will focus on building international partnerships with universities and ministries to help develop solutions for the optimal use of water in agriculture. At the conference last May, the University of Nebraska agreed to establish a joint program with UNESCO IHE in the Netherlands, the world's largest graduate program in management of water. University leaders are also working to develop other partnerships in China, India, Brazil and other countries.

**Additional reaction to the Lenton appointment:**

**Mogens Bay**, Chairman of the Robert B. Daugherty Charitable Foundation and a member of the Board of Directors of the Daugherty Institute: "Roberto Lenton brings extensive and valuable experience in finding practical solutions to global challenges with water. There could be no better preparation for leadership of the Institute than Dr. Lenton's impressive work with the World Bank Inspection Panel, the Earth Institute at Columbia University and major water management initiatives in Asia, Africa and Latin America. He will bring the Institute immediate recognition and credibility throughout the world."

**Dr. Ronnie Green**, Vice Chancellor and Vice President, Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources, University of Nebraska: "Dr. Lenton brings a wealth of global experience to the Daugherty Water for Food Institute that will allow the University of Nebraska to capitalize on its considerable strengths of Nebraska's major water resources and long history of excellence in agricultural water innovation and education. Meeting the grand challenge of feeding a growing world population with more efficient use of scarce water resources requires great vision and we are tremendously excited to have someone of Roberto's caliber coming to lead us in this highly important initiative for Nebraska and the world."

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