

**Executive Director**

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**Ann M. Veneman**



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Executive Director.**

Ann M. Veneman assumed the leadership of UNICEF on May 1, 2005, becoming the fifth Executive Director to lead UNICEF in its 60-year history.

As the children's agency of the United Nations, UNICEF works on the ground in 157 developing and transitional countries to help children survive and thrive. The world's largest provider of vaccines for poor countries, UNICEF works to advance the Millennium Development Goals by supporting child health and nutrition, quality basic education for all boys and girls, access to clean water and sanitation, and the protection of children from violence, exploitation and AIDS.

At UNICEF Veneman directs a global agency of 10,000 staff and an annual budget of more than \$2 billion, funded entirely by the voluntary contributions of governments, businesses, foundations and individuals.

Prior to joining UNICEF, Veneman served as the 27th Secretary of the United States Department of Agriculture, managing a department of 111,000 employees; a program level of \$113 billion that would rank sixth-largest if it were a U.S. corporation; and one of the most diverse and challenging missions in government.

She has been a leader in international trade and development, and has championed programs to reduce world hunger and strengthen the food-producing capacity of developing nations.

During her tenure at the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Veneman directed major international programs that included the \$300 million Global Food for Education Program, which reached 4,000 schools and saw enrollment rise among both boys and girls by nearly 12 per cent. She also directed major initiatives in nutrition assistance and nutrition education, foreign food aid, and agriculture development assistance both at home and abroad.

Much of Veneman's career has been focused on child nutrition, public health, and alleviating hunger, including major initiatives to help fight malnutrition around the world.

She actively promoted science and technology in the developing world as a means to accelerate agricultural productivity and help meet the World Food Summit goal of reducing global hunger by half by 2015. She led the U.S. delegation to the World Food Summit meeting in 2001, where she called for a global ministerial-level conference on how to reduce hunger and poverty in the developing world.

Organized and led by Ms. Veneman, that Ministerial Conference took place in 2003. It addressed the links between hunger and poverty, bringing together government ministers from 120 nations representing a broad cross-section of portfolios, from finance to agriculture to health. The ministerial meeting spawned follow-on regional conferences in Africa and Central America, and helped lead heads of state in several African nations to endorse new scientific approaches to feeding the hungry.

Veneman has also been a strong advocate for healthy lifestyle choices. Her obesity-prevention initiative spawned a scientific conference that has helped establish a research agenda. She directed improvements in the consistency and effectiveness of public nutrition education messages. She also oversaw the reauthorization of food assistance and child nutrition programs.

Strong, transparent management is another hallmark of Veneman's career. During her tenure at USDA, the department for the first time received a clean financial audit, a status it then attained three years in a row. USDA also implemented numerous far-reaching management improvements, such as the eGovernment Initiative to provide more programs and services electronically.

Ms. Veneman has also taken a keen personal interest in fostering the next generation of young leaders, establishing USDA's "Leaders of Tomorrow" initiative to strengthen education programs, particularly those involved with mentoring youth. She increased the number of internships at USDA, and encouraged young people to seek career opportunities in government and across the agricultural spectrum.

Veneman has traveled extensively in developing countries, meeting with heads of state and visiting field projects in every region of the world. Over the years she has worked closely with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the World Food Program, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, the World Bank, the World Trade Organization, and numerous charitable groups and community organizations.

Veneman previously served in various positions at USDA and in state government. From 1991 to 1993, she was USDA's Deputy Secretary, the Department's second-highest position. She also served as Deputy Undersecretary of Agriculture for International Affairs and Commodity Programs from 1989 to 1991. Veneman joined the USDA's Foreign Agricultural Service in 1986 and eventually served as Associate Administrator until 1989. From 1995 to 1999, she served as Secretary of the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA).

She began her legal career as a staff attorney with the General Counsel's office of the Bay Area Rapid Transit District in Oakland, California, in 1976. In 1978, she returned to her hometown of Modesto, where she served as a Deputy Public Defender. In 1980, she joined the Modesto law firm of Damrell, Damrell and Nelson, where she was an associate and later a partner.

She practiced law with the Washington, D.C., law firm of Patton Boggs from 1993 to 1995 before returning to California to serve as the state's Secretary of Food and Agriculture, where she managed agricultural programs and services in the largest and most diverse agriculture-producing U.S. state. Before her appointment as U.S. Secretary of Agriculture, Veneman was with the California law firm of Nossaman, Guthner, Knox and Elliott.

Veneman earned her bachelor's degree in political science from the University of California, Davis; a master's degree in public policy from the University of California, Berkeley; and a juris doctorate degree from the University of California, Hastings College of Law. She has also been awarded honorary doctorate degrees from California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo (2001); Lincoln University of Missouri (2003); and Delaware State University (2004).

In a personal capacity, she serves as a board member of the Close Up Foundation, a nonpartisan civic education organization, and has served previously on a number of advisory councils and committees, particularly those involving higher education.

Veneman has received numerous awards and distinctions, including: Outstanding Woman in International Trade Award (2001); UC Davis Outstanding Alumna of the Year Award (2001); Food Research and Action Center Award (2001); National 4-H Alumni Recognition Award (2002); Dutch American Heritage Award (2002); Junior Statesman Foundation Statesman of the Year Award (2002); Goldman School of Public Policy Alumna of the Year Award (2003); American PVO Partners Award for Service to People in Need (2004); U.S. State Department U.S. Afghan Women's Council Honorary Membership (2004); and the Richard E. Lyng Award for Public Service (2005).