

Opening address

Takahiro Inoue

President, JIRCAS

GOOD MORNING. Distinguished Guests, Participants, Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the Japan International Research Center for Agricultural Sciences, JIRCAS, I would like to extend my cordial welcome to all the guests and participants, in particular to those who came to Japan from abroad, including keynote speakers. It is our great pleasure to have had the opportunity to organize the 9th JIRCAS International Symposium, Value-Addition to Agricultural Products, in cooperation with the National Agricultural Research Organization, National Food Research Institute, Fisheries Research Agency, *PhAction*, and Food Forum Tsukuba. I really appreciate your participation in and contribution to this symposium and I would like to express my gratitude for *PhAction* members' voluntary participation in and presentations at this symposium.

In April last year, JIRCAS was reorganized from a governmental institution to an Independent Administrative Institution. At the time of this reorganization, JIRCAS set up a new division, the Food Science and Technology Division, in considering the important role of postharvest research. This means that, in addition to preharvest researches—such as breeding, cultivation technology and animal science—JIRCAS is to be engaged in research activities in the field of postharvest technology in ways that contribute to food security, poverty alleviation and sustainable development on a global scale, through research collaboration with scientists in developing countries.

Postharvest research covers a wide range of themes from farm to table. Postharvest technology was also the topic at the 5th JIRCAS International Symposium in 1998, when we discussed mainly postharvest losses of grains. Based on the discussion and conclusion of this meeting, JIRCAS launched a project, Reduction of Post-harvest Losses of Rice in Southeast Asia, in 2000.

The roles of rural areas, where agriculture and food industry greatly contribute to the rural activity, are highly important from the perspectives of food security in the world and food supply in developing countries. Agriculture is still the largest sector of rural economies, and the majority of the rural population is engaged in agriculture, forestry and fisheries in developing countries. The incomes of rural people are much lower than those of urban people, and the population has been shifting from rural to urban areas, seeking better incomes and more convenient daily life. These trends will lead to the reduction of rural potential as a base for food. On the other hand, it is difficult for small-scale rural agro-industry to compete with the big companies of the urbanized and developed countries. In considering these facts, we have to make efforts to give rural people and entrepreneurs tools to increase their incomes. Rural farmers and small-scale agro-industry should provide products that meet the demands of consumers, through ensuring the quality and safety of and adding value to their commodities.

Therefore, we have to focus our postharvest research not only on postharvest losses but also on quality, safety and value-addition. Today, we hold the 9th JIRCAS International Symposium on Value-Addition to discuss the future research in this field at JIRCAS so that

our activities may contribute to the increase of farmers' income and the vitalization of the rural economy in developing countries. I am convinced that valuable information about the orientation of the postharvest research will be provided and exchanged through the presentations and discussions during this symposium by both Japanese and overseas experts.

I again wish to express my cordial welcome to all the guests and participants.

Thank you.