

# Welcoming remarks

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

On this occasion of opening the 9<sup>th</sup> JIRCAS International Symposium, I am greatly honored to make an address on behalf of the Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries Research Council, Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries of Japan.

First of all, I would like to express my sincere appreciation for your thoughtful invitation to this symposium and show my respect to all of the participants—from the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, and various countries in Asia, Africa, Europe and South America, as well as all of the people who have worked very hard in the preparation of the symposium.

The Millennium Development Goals, which were adopted at the General Conference of the United Nations held in September in 2000, set 'eradication of poverty and hunger' as one of the most important subjects. In the Declaration at the World Summit on Sustainable Development held in Johannesburg very recently, 'improvement of access to clean water, sanitation and food security' was also mentioned. Approximately 800 million people are currently suffering from lasting undernourishment in the world. Moreover, approximately 70% of poor people live in rural areas and are dependent on agriculture. Considering this situation, I believe promoting agriculture and rural areas is a very significant subject and agricultural researches play a critical role in supporting agriculture, because agriculture provides farmers with opportunities of employment and brings income to them, along with the eradication of hunger.

For example, as one of the achievements in the latest researches that have contributed to the eradication of hunger, I would like to introduce the development of NERICA, or 'New Rice for Africa' by WARDA (West Africa Rice Development Association) based in the Ivory Coast in West Africa. NERICA offers possibilities as Asian rice species with high yield potential, as well as African rice species—resistant to disease and drought. NERICA is expected to contribute greatly to the food issues in Africa. The development of NERICA has been supported by a large number of international organizations and agricultural research institutes, such as UNDP (United Nations Development Programme), JIRCAS and so on. For the eradication of hunger, it is getting more important to have researches aiming at saving resources, lowering environmental load and higher yields.

Besides, consumers in the world are having more and more concerns on food safety and quality. In developing countries, from the viewpoint of improvement of farmers' income—not only for hunger eradication, but also for getting rid of poverty—it is also essential to ensure the safety and quality of agricultural products and value-addition to them.

The persons concerned from international organizations, agricultural research institutes in Japan, universities and private organizations, get together at the JIRCAS International Symposiums, which provide opportunities to discuss issues on agriculture, forestry and

fisheries in the developing regions. With the first event going back to 1994, this occasion already marks the 9th Symposium. The theme of the Symposium for this year is 'Value-Addition to Agricultural Products—Towards Increase of Farmers' Income and Vitalization of Rural Economy'. Considering the current situation of agriculture and rural areas in the world, as I mentioned already, this theme is very timely from that standpoint and in terms of improving food quality and safety and leading to the eradication of hunger.

In efforts to eradicate hunger and poverty in the world, international agricultural researches are getting more and more important. Now, I would like to suggest to all of you who joined this symposium that we introduce the role of international agricultural researches to the public progressively, disseminating the achievements in this symposium all over the world.

From such viewpoints, on October 25, the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries of Japan is scheduled to hold the seminar titled 'The Role of Agriculture in the Sustainable Development' at the United Nations University in Tokyo in cooperation with CGIAR (Consultative Group for International Agricultural Research) and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan. To conclude my address, I expect your positive participation in that coming seminar and wish the further development of international agricultural researches in the future.

Thank you.

# Keynote Addresses

