

Welcome Address

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Good morning, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries Research Council, it is my great pleasure to present an address on the occasion of the 8th JIRCAS International Symposium.

First of all, I would like to congratulate JIRCAS over its fresh start as an Independent Administrative Institute. I would also like to express my appreciation to the distinguished guests who attend this symposium.

Let me take this opportunity to introduce our basic strategy on international research. Our Council has established the "Ten Years' Plan of Research and Development for Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries". In relation to the international research programs, three major points were presented in the plan as follows:

The first point is "promoting research collaboration with developing countries" through JIRCAS in the regions of Asia, Africa, and South America. JIRCAS has carried out 76 research projects with 19 developing countries in the past 30 years.

The second point is "strengthening cooperation with international research organizations, such as CGIAR centers". We have dispatched about 100 Japanese researchers to the CG-centers and other international organizations for research cooperation.

The third point is "inviting researchers from developing countries to carry out research collaboration". We have been implementing this collaboration at JIRCAS and other research institutions. JIRCAS invites senior researchers to conduct research collaboration not only at its headquarter in Tsukuba but also at its Okinawa Station in Ishigaki island, taking advantage of the subtropical environment there. JIRCAS has invited over 800 people until today from all over the world. We intend to make this human network wider and stronger hereafter as well.

Meanwhile, there is no doubt that biotechnology is indispensable for further food production to cope with increased demand caused by expanding human population. It is gaining more importance for developing countries. We also have to pay attention to this novel technology from the viewpoint of environmental protection, especially through risk assessment according to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety. Recognizing such circumstances, in addition to the traditional programs I mentioned before, we started a new program this year for capacity building in the area of biotechnology. Last September, Japan organized the "APEC-JIRCAS Joint Symposium and Workshop on Agricultural Biotechnology" which was held in Bangkok, Thailand, in collaboration with APEC. There were nearly 300 participants from governments and research institutions. JIRCAS also has invited researchers for capacity building under this program, and will continue to invite 2 or 3 researchers every year.

Now I would like to go down to the title of this symposium "Water for Sustainable Agriculture."

Our government revised "the Agriculture Law" in 1999 after almost 40 years since the former law was enacted in 1961. In this law, the importance of multi-functionality of agriculture is being emphasized. The concept of multi-functionality is that agriculture has functions besides food production, including food security, land conservation, creation of favorable landscape, etc. It should be noted that this multi-functionality cannot be realized at all, unless the agricultural system is sustainable. While JIRCAS has held an international symposium every year since 1995, the main titles of the last three symposia in 1998 and last year were related to the subject of sustainable agriculture. The situation definitely shows that sustainable agriculture is of major interest to us. It is clear that water is the most important factor for sustainable agriculture.

Finally, I would like to conclude by congratulating again JIRCAS and its counterpart organizations over their collaboration, and stating my sincere hope that this symposium will mark another milestone for further development of agriculture and human life in the 21st century.

Thank you very much.