

Welcome Address

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I wish to express my congratulations on the opening of the 2005 International Symposium in Ishigaki by Japan International Research Center for Agricultural Sciences.

First of all, I wish to express my deep thanks to all the presenters who have been carrying out experiments and researching day and night to support agriculture, a basic industry in this rural area. I also wish to extend a heartfelt welcome to the participants from the Pacific Rim countries, the Philippines, Fiji and New Caledonia, as well as those from Japan.

Agriculture is very diversified in the Yaeyama area of Okinawa Prefecture. It includes sugarcane; pineapples and mangos—tropical fruits grown under the subtropical climate; pumpkins grown in gardens during winter and spring seasons; and beef cattle raising.

On the other hand, circumstances surrounding agriculture, forestry and fisheries industries encounter difficulties due to intensifying competition among producing centers of agricultural commodities both at home and abroad, decline in the number of farmers, their increasing average age of farmers, and so on.

Okinawa Prefecture is actively working on measures to enhance its production and supply system and to develop and disseminate improved technologies for agriculture, forestry and fisheries. These measures aim at rejuvenating these industries by utilizing fully the regional features and establishing an “Okinawa Brand” in accordance with the consumer and market needs under the plan of the Okinawa Prefectural Government for promoting agriculture, forestry and fisheries industries. Under such circumstances, it is particularly important and of a great meaning that the participants in the symposium will present their research results in order to build a new network of agricultural research among *islands* in the tropical and subtropical regions. I believe today’s symposium will lead to closer cooperation among institutions/agencies concerned and their contribution toward the development of vibrant and sustainable agriculture in the regions.

In addition, I would like to encourage all the participants to take the opportunity to experience the climate of the Yaeyama Islands and hospitality being full of humanity of the islanders, and to deepen the understanding of the area.

I wish to conclude my greetings by thanking JIRCAS for its efforts to organize the symposium and wishing all the participants every success in their careers.

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