

## Opening Address

**Nobuyoshi Maeno**

Director General

JIRCAS

Distinguished Guests, Participants, Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the Symposium Organizing Committee, I have the honor and privilege to open the International Symposium on "Postharvest Technology in Asia", which is organized by the Japan International Research Center for Agricultural Sciences, Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, Japan.

Above all, I would like to extend my cordial welcome to all the guests and the participants, in particular to those who came to Japan from abroad. JIRCAS was established in October 1993 as a result of the reorganization of the former Tropical Agriculture Research Center to further promote research for the development of agricultural technology to cope with the changes in the world situation.

The research activities of JIRCAS encompass all the fields of agriculture, forestry and fisheries. Needless to say, this expansion of the research fields could not have been achieved without the strong support of all the institutes affiliated with the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF) of Japan.

In addition, the research activities of JIRCAS are not limited to collaboration with developing countries in the tropics and subtropics but cover wider geographic regions such as cool areas and temperate zones.

One of the major activities of JIRCAS is to dispatch research scientists to overseas research institutions located in developing countries to conduct collaborative research work on various subjects relating to agriculture, forestry and fisheries.

In addition, to support these activities, JIRCAS consolidated the structure of research at the Center in Tsukuba and at the Okinawa Subtropical Station of the Center by promoting advanced studies relating to biotechnological fields, computer simulation of selected economic and environmental processes relevant to the developing countries, postharvest technology, etc.

Another important activity of JIRCAS is to hold international symposia for exchanging information and ideas among different countries and scientists. These symposia have been held each year, covering various subjects of agricultural research.

The present symposium is the fifth symposium organized by JIRCAS and it will provide the opportunity to discuss various aspects relating to the development of postharvest technology in the Asian countries.

Although in the developing regions including Asia, emphasis has generally been placed on the development of technology to increase food production to meet the requirements of an expanding population, postharvest technology is presently assuming a growing importance.

Indeed, losses and decrease of quality of agricultural commodities which are often substantial when technology relating to drying, transportation, primary processing such as milling of cereals, storage, packaging, etc. is inadequate or not available may jeopardize the supply of food in the respective countries as well as reduce the value-added of the commodities for export to earn foreign currency.

On the other hand, along with the improvement of the socio-economic conditions and trend to urbanization in the Asian countries, the consumption of processed foods is becoming more common. It is therefore essential to develop technologies which can be utilized by the food industry to supply agricultural products with enhanced quality, safety, nutritive value and diversity for both the domestic and international markets. In this regard, international collaboration is of paramount importance and the implementation of collaborative projects in the field of postharvest and food-processing technology should be further promoted in the Asian countries.

I am convinced that valuable information will be exchanged throughout the discussions during this symposium.

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

Thank you.