

Opening Remarks

Masa Iwanaga

President of JIRCAS

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Distinguished guests, participants, ladies and gentlemen. On behalf of the organizers, it is my great honor and privilege to open this year's JIRCAS International Symposium titled "Why 'Quality' Matters in International Agriculture Research". Today's gathering is organized by the Japan International Research Center for Agricultural Sciences, JIRCAS, and co-sponsored by The United Nations University Institute for the Advanced Study of Sustainability, under the auspices of the Research Council Secretariat of the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, the Japan International Cooperation Agency, JICA, and Japanese Society of Regional and Agricultural Development, as well as the Japan Forum on International Agricultural Research for Sustainable Development, J-FARD.

First of all, I would like to extend my cordial welcome to all the guests and participants, particularly those who came from overseas. I also would like to express my sincere thanks to our prominent keynote speakers, Director General Ann Tutwiler of Bioversity International and Director Ichiro Tambo of JICA Research Institute, for their kind acceptance to deliver very relevant lectures in this symposium. I also would like to extend my appreciation to the other speakers, chairs, and discussants in the sessions to follow today.

On September 25th of this year, just around one month ago, the United Nations General Assembly formally adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, together with the new Global Goals at the UN Sustainable Development Summit. The new framework, called "Transforming our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development", this is composed of 17 Global Goals and 169 specific targets covering a broad range of sustainable issues, which include the eradication of poverty, fighting against inequality, and the challenge of tackling climate change in the next 15 years. One of the 17 Global Goals is to end hunger, achieve food security and improve nutrition, and promote sustainable agriculture. The Global Goals intend to build on the progress achieved under the historic Millennium Development Goals.

Recently, in addition to well-known international development keywords, such as "climate change", "food security" and "poverty alleviation", we, international groups and communities, have also been paying attention to several new and relevant keywords such as "nutrition security", "establishment of food value chains", "resilience", "inclusive development" and "participatory research and development". These emerging keywords focus on qualitative aspects of development rather than just the quantitative expansion of the economy as represented by the GDP growth rates.

Today's symposium, therefore, will zero in on "quality", which is a common aspect of these emerging keywords in international development.

In research, we recognize "quality" to mean not only the "quality" of research outputs but also of development objectives and research approaches, such as promoting trilateral cooperation, strengthening a linkage between public institutes and private companies, and transferring research outputs to the target users and beneficiaries.

In this symposium, we will showcase some significant highlights of JIRCAS international research collaborations implemented under the current medium-term plan covering the financial years of 2011 to 2015, as well as relevant outcomes of other studies conducted by our research partners while considering how this research relates to quality. Finally, we will identify the future direction of international agricultural research and the steps that must be taken in order to contribute towards high quality development.

We, JIRCAS, function as a center of agricultural research for development in Japan. Thus, we endeavor to keep our research programs timely and relevant to address important issues in a continuously changing world. We hope that this symposium would become a good opportunity for sharing our research outcomes in order to provide quality solutions to global problems.

Finally, I'd like to express my sincere hope that with your precious contributions, this symposium will be fruitful and will attain the objectives for which it was organized. Thank you very much.