

Opening Remarks



Masa Iwanaga

President, JIRCAS

Distinguished guests, participants, ladies and gentlemen, good afternoon. It is my great honor and privilege to open the JIRCAS International Symposium 2019, “International research collaboration to tackle the transboundary plant pests: Contributions to Sustainable Development Goals.”

This symposium is organized by Japan International Research Center for Agricultural Sciences -- JIRCAS -- together with the National Agriculture and Food Research Organization, NARO.

First of all, I would like to extend a warm welcome to all our distinguished guests and participants to this symposium. I would also like to express my special appreciation to the keynote speakers, Dr. Xia of the International Plant Protection Convention, FAO, and Dr. Kuhlmann of CABI, and then the session speakers, Dr. Baudron from CIMMYT, Dr. Godoy from Embrapa Soybean in Brazil, and all of the other speakers from Japan.

Thank you very much for taking your time out from your very busy schedule to join us today here in Tsukuba and share your expertise, in-depth knowledge, and insight on tackling transboundary plant pests in this symposium.

As a research institute in Japan that plays a key role in international collaboration in the field of agriculture, forestry, and fisheries, JIRCAS aims to provide solutions to global environmental problems and food insecurity, and to contribute to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals in addressing the global challenges we face, including those related to poverty, hunger, climate change, and environmental degradation.

As part of our program on stable agriculture production in the tropics and other adverse environments, we are pursuing a research collaboration towards the development of technologies for the control and management of plant pests and diseases. We focus on some of the world’s most destructive migratory insects and devastating plant diseases, in collaboration with countries and regions in Southeast Asia, Africa, and South America, where these pests and diseases continue to cause significant losses to agriculture production.

Global efforts to improve food security and to meet the demands of the world’s growing population are now threatened by the emergence and spread of transboundary plant pests and diseases. Recent estimates indicate that the damage in crops by pests accounts for 20% to 40% of losses in global food production.

In recent years, this threat has become even more frequent and severe due to globalization, reduced resilience in agriculture production systems, and advancing climate change or climate crisis.

Global warming in particular has contributed a great deal to the increasing spread of transboundary pests and diseases, with outbreaks in regions and countries not previously affected, and causing damages and huge

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losses to major crops. And it is expected that this threat will continue to intensify in the coming years and beyond.

At the Meeting of G20 Agricultural Chief Scientists, G20 MACS, held in Tokyo on the 25th and the 26th of April 2019, transboundary plant pests and climate change were recognized as the two major issues that pose a serious threat to global food security.

It was also emphasized that in dealing with transboundary plant pests, effective actions through international collaboration in areas such as diagnostic technologies, epidemiology, monitoring technology, introduction of border measures, and measures for prevention and control, should be implemented with initiatives that include developing countries.

We have therefore organized this JIRCAS International Symposium in line with G20 MACS' interest in order to get an overview of the current status of research on transboundary plant pests and diseases at the regional and international levels, and to identify various initiatives for prevention and control that needs immediate action at both the regional and global levels.

In conjunction with the observance of the International Year of Plant Health next year, 2020, this symposium is also aimed at raising awareness in how protecting crops from pests can help end hunger and poverty, protect the environment, and boost economic development.

Ladies and gentlemen, today our keynote and session speakers will share with us the challenges involved in tackling this global program, the impacts to our society, measures to help affected countries and farmers, and programs to mitigate the damage of crops in developing countries.

We will also hear talks on emerging pests and diseases, risk analysis and technologies for forecasting of migratory insect pests, research networks and quarantine procedures to prevent the spread of plant pests.

I hope that this symposium increases not only awareness on this global problem, but also strengthens the commitment among us in the research field to put this issue at the forefront of agriculture and environmental research, leading to coordinated and multidisciplinary efforts, as well as regional and international cooperation, and preparedness to effectively respond to new and emerging transboundary pests and diseases.

Finally, I would like to express my sincere wishes to everyone for an inspirational, productive, and successful symposium. Thank you very much.