

Inaugural Address

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Distinguished Guests and Participants,

On behalf of the Symposium Organizing Committee and of the Tropical Agriculture Research Center sponsoring the Symposium, I have the honor to open the International Symposium on Distribution, Characteristics and Utilization of Problem Soils.

Above all, I would like to extend my cordial welcome to all the distinguished delegates and participants, in particular to those who have come over to Japan from abroad.

The Tropical Agriculture Research Center was established in 1970 with the objective of contributing to the development of agricultural technology in the tropical areas by undertaking research programs, including research on soil science, in a spirit of international collaboration. The basic principle of our research activities is to work together with overseas scientists on a partnership basis to solve technical obstacles which hamper the agricultural development of the tropical countries. The activities of the Center cover a fairly wide range of research fields such as crop production, plant protection, forestry, agricultural engineering, farm management in the tropics, etc.

One of the major activities of the Center is to send research scientists from Japan to overseas research institutions located in the tropical countries to conduct cooperative research work in agricultural fields. About 40 staff members of the Center with long-term assignments are engaged each year in such cooperative activities in many parts of the world, mainly in the Asian countries and partly in the Latin American countries. When the effective cooperation requires any additional basic research work with the use of sophisticated equipment which is presently not available in the cooperating institutions, our Center invites to Japan the research partners involved so as to enable them to carry out the necessary work.

An other important activity of the Center is to hold international symposia for exchanging information and views among different countries and among scientists concerned. Since 1967, the symposia have been held every year, covering such subjects as crop diseases, animal production, methods of crop breeding, optimization of fertilizer effect, water management in paddy fields, silvicultural technologies, etc.

The present symposium, the fifteenth of this kind, will give the opportunity to consider various aspects relating to problem soils in the tropics and the subtropics. These soils which are highly weathered and have a low content in nutrients due to intrinsic causes such as the presence of "variable charge" or external factors related to inadequate cultural practices or environmental conditions are characterized by a low fertility which is a major constraint to the increase of agricultural production in these regions. Since such soils are frequently observed in the tropics, it is essential that their exact distribution be correctly evaluated and their chemical and physical properties thoroughly studied if methods to improve their productivity are to be developed. We also realize that in addition to the application of chemical fertilizers which is often out of reach of the average farmer in the tropics, more practical methods of soil conservation and management such as the use of cover crops, incorporation of crop residues or animal wastes into soil, minimum tillage should be promoted to prevent further deterioration of soil fertility and water regime.

I am convinced that the discussions in the present symposium will further contribute to the enhancement of research in these fields.

I sincerely hope that the symposium will be successful and that, through our joint effort, friendship and cooperation will be strengthened.

Thank you.