

**Introductory Remarks by
Dennis Rangi
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Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, good morning and welcome.

It is a great pleasure to see you and be with you here for CABI's 16th Review Conference and Global Summit on Food Security in a Climate of Change. During the last 18 months we have held discussions with representatives from CABI's member countries - we met in Nairobi, Beijing and Port of Spain and I am pleased to see many of you who attended these meetings here today. Food security was a reoccurring topic of discussion and a major source of concern. It's today, headline news all over the world and even consumers in developed countries are starting to think that they might need to take more notice of how food appears on their supermarket shelves. But Africa remains the most vulnerable - the images of desperation and hopelessness you see on the screen are a painful reminder of the issue at hand. So you will excuse me if I seem biased towards Africa.

Let me give you a personal story. The theme of this Summit – Food Security in a Climate of Change – could not have been more appropriate. I come from a village in the West of Kenya on the shores of Lake Victoria, and there is a saying in my village that - “when it rains it does not rain on one roof only”! We now live in a global village, and the wisdom of that saying becomes more apparent by the day. The implication of this is the whole world is now so interconnected and countries are so dependent on each other that a problem far away, say in China, has as much bearing in a village in Kenya and Switzerland as it does in China – it may only be a matter of time!

Perhaps the single largest threat to food security that virtually all countries have in common today is climate change – it's hard now to avoid the conclusion that it's happening. The threat is bigger in Africa because of already fragile ecosystems and weak infrastructure. Changing weather patterns are there to see... You can see the changes on the slopes of the great Mt. Kilimanjaro. While growing up as a boy in Nairobi, the magnificent sight of Kilimanjaro, standing proudly on the Tanzanian Kenyan border, covered in snow could be seen clearly and was a powerful symbol of Africa. However, as the years have passed the snow caps have receded dramatically and today Kilimanjaro stands as a stark reminder of the reality of climate change. Scientific evidence is also clear, with the third assessment report of the intergovernmental panel on climate change, reporting an increase of 0.6°C in mean global surface temperature during the 20th century. Probably the greatest increase in the last a thousand years (IPCC, 2001)!

But Kilimanjaro is not the only visible reminder of change in Africa. There is Lake Chad which has virtually disappeared. Then there is Lake Victoria the largest lake in Africa. The shores bordered by Uganda, Tanzania and Kenya, are some of the most densely populated rural areas in the world and a crucial resource to millions of people (USDA, 2005). The high population density and industrialization around the lake is resulting in increased dumping of raw sewage and factory waste and this – coupled with drainage of the wetlands to produce agricultural land is threatening the health of the lake and the waters on which these people rely. There are already reports (New York Times) that Nile Perch stocks have already dropped by about 70%. But what is more alarming is the fact that water levels have dropped by about 3 feet in the last 10 years. And that is not to mention the water hyacinth and algal blooms that are choking the fish. There is no question that this constitutes irrefutable evidence of climate change, overpopulation, pollution, deforestation, etc that are all coming together to a part of Africa that is least prepared to deal with it.

So what's the impact? Sadly, Africa whose share of global business is a meagre 3% and which only constituted 3.3% of carbon dioxide emissions in 2004, is beginning to bear the brunt of the problem with severe consequences on its agriculture, which is a dominant supporter of rural livelihoods and economic growth on the continent!

Climate change, whatever the causes, is real and is likely to affect much of the continent. According to the World Bank Development Report 2009 big areas in Africa will become unsuitable for farming some staples like wheat due to droughts and floods, and increased incidence of pest and diseases will attack the crops they grow. Most places will get hotter – in some it will be wetter, in others drier, - but even in the wetter areas, soils will be more prone to drying out due to the high temperatures and rainfall will become more variable and less reliable in many places.

I am reminded how His Excellency Chissano (former President of Mozambique) in one of his articles – *“Getting Priorities Right”* described how he personally witnessed during his Presidency the severe flooding in 2000 and 2001 when he led the emergency response to the crisis. You will recall the BBC report on the same of 2nd March - “Born Above the Floodwaters” - the story of Baby Rositha Pedro who was born on top of a tree while her mother clung for safety above the floods. She is lucky to have survived. And mother and child must be in the Guinness book of records – sadly for the wrong reason.

Feeding our growing population, which is expected to reach 9 billion by 2050, is a huge challenge for the world – even without the issues climate change is bringing.

In developing nations, it is smallholder farmers who feed a large majority of their countries populations. There are about 525 million farms worldwide, providing a

livelihood for about 40% of the world's population. Nearly 90% of these are smallholder farms defined as having less than two hectares of land. This means smallholder farming is the largest occupation in the world!

Climate change is not the only challenge developing countries are facing, **there are Pest and Disease Risks that at least we can do something about!**

There has been much focus on growing more food through improved seed varieties, genetically modified organisms and plant breeding to give crops with higher yields. But increased production is of little value if farmers lose a large proportion of their crops to pests and diseases. In many countries close to 50% of crops are lost to pests and diseases whilst in the field and in storage after harvest. That is a massive amount of waste! Therefore, as farmers are supported to grow more they must also be supported to lose less of what they grow in addition to having good access to functional markets for their products.

Also, increased travel and trade brings risks that our imports will contain unwelcome stowaways that have the potential to devastate our natural resources. The risks involved are well illustrated by the case of the larger grain borer for example, once comfortable in its home in Central America, but now steadily eating its way through the maize stores of Africa. This insect was imported with grain donations. The damage caused by the insect is enormous, and large amounts of resources have been devoted to trying to control it. For example, on maize, the LGB costs Tanzania USD 91M annually. There are many similar examples like the LGB.

What this means is quarantine must be conducted in a way that stands up to close scrutiny, requiring systematic evaluation of scientific, technical and economic information.

As we all know there are also risks associated with Land Use Change! New economic activities or opportunities like the growing of biofuels mean better economic times for our countries but if not managed well they too, will present new threats to an already fragile agricultural system and take over land that can be used to grow food, so it's important to pay attention to the possible negative effects they may cause in the long term.

In addition to this, a new phenomenon is emerging as a result of the food crisis experienced last year. According to an IFPRI study, one of the effects of the crisis in the last 12 months is a proliferation of acquisition of farmland in developing countries by the food importing countries – especially those rich with oil revenues. This new context creates risks and opportunities and is a cause for concern. While it may seem beneficial to the recipient governments in the short term, placing sustainable development at the centre of investment decision-making and ensuring that host countries are still able to produce enough food for

their own people, is crucial. Long term benefits need to be clearly assessed from a food security angle and not just business.

Human Capacity presents another risk. Capacity building remains an issue. A study conducted by AU recently predicted that close to 70% of African scientists currently working in agricultural development will retire in the next 10 years. Unfortunately there will be no corresponding replacement to match the retirement and we are beginning to see this in our recruitment. But even more unfortunate is in the course of our coffee work in Africa we found a similar picture in respect to the age of the coffee farmers. Coffee production in Ethiopia is mostly undertaken by the older, less educated generation. Agriculture in general is viewed by the younger and educated generation as full of drudgery and non-remunerative.

These are just some examples of the challenges that are staring at us. The world's population is now over 6.7B people. Sitting and doing nothing is not an option. We must change tack and work smarter. This meeting provides a great opportunity to address important long-term issues that are central to food security and development.

But its not just gloom all round there are Opportunities as well. And I must also say there have been successes that we need to build on. In a continent where most people would have died never having used a phone throughout their entire lives, the mobile phone market is the fastest growing in the world and today small businesses are thriving as a result. Farmers are able to access markets more efficiently. Money can be moved around the country using phones to pay for bills. Mobile phone banking known as “MPESA” in Kenya, for example, has given rural communities an opportunity to save and keep their cash safely. Rural communities have an opportunity to link up and to demand and get services from the government. But perhaps an important aspect of more effective communication is the impact on good governance – a prerequisite for development all over the continent. Governments can no longer hide and conceal information from its citizens – this has led to increased transparency and accountability. In short, nowhere in Africa is far away any longer!

Then there is **Cooperation between Asia and Africa.** This is on the increase and there is a lot that Africa can borrow from the Asian experience. Although there are still significant pockets of poverty in parts of Asia, the continent has done remarkably well in lifting millions out of poverty. It's important to note here that China and India (Asia's emerging global economic powerhouses) are members of CABI. CABI is already engaged and active in being a catalyst in some of these interactions.

In summary there are several 'quick wins' that could be made. These include improved knowledge sharing, improved quarantine, improved storage, improved identification and diagnosis of crop pests and diseases and increased

surveillance and early warning systems for monitoring the spread of crop pests and diseases.”

Our discussions today will look at the issue of Food Security from 4 dimensions or sub themes:

(i) Helping to achieve MDG1 to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger. Discussions will focus on rising food prices, driven by increasing demands for food, changing food preferences, economic growth, rising fuel prices, and inappropriate agricultural policies, which have eroded progress towards this goal. Experts will discuss initiatives in place to help achieve the targets set in 2000.

(ii) Climate change and its influence on food security. The global impacts and consequences of climate change on food security are already being felt. Changing temperatures, greenhouse gas concentration and precipitation patterns have had a direct effect on crop yields, while the resulting increase in insect and plant diseases and weeds are major constraints to crop production.

(iii) Trade and Markets implications on Food Security. Discussions will highlight the complex issues of trade and markets and the potential impact that trade reform and addressing access to markets can have on the ability of the agricultural sector to contribute to improved food security.

(iv) ICTs in agricultural development. ICTs are transforming activities, which depend on information and present new, often low cost opportunities for disseminating and sharing information and knowledge. Discussions will focus on the impact and key role played by ICTs in agricultural development and in ensuring food security.

I am delighted that we have been joined by experts in these areas and with your knowledge and participation we will be able to make a great success of this Summit.

As I conclude, I want to leave you with one message. What I (and I believe all of us) have learnt over the years, people in poverty want for their children what we in this room want for ours – i.e. they want a good life where the basics like education and good health are guaranteed. But even more importantly, they want to be assured of their next meal – and this is what this conference is all about. We must step up to meet these challenges and safeguard the future. The responses and programmes that are being designed to address these have big implications for our organisations.

CABI, as an intergovernmental organization, has a role to play in bringing people from around the world together to make a difference – we have done it for the last 100 years and we will continue to play our part. To achieve this, we must not underestimate the power of partnerships and CABI is already working with a

number of partners who are represented here today. As they say, if you want to go fast you go alone and if you want to go far you go with others. Tomorrow, we will discuss how CABI and its member countries can work together to develop practical solutions for growing more and losing less.

Finally, I would like to thank my CABI Colleagues for organising this meeting and I do acknowledge the support we have got from all of you. We are very much looking forward to the outcomes of the Summit.

I thank you all very much for your attention and participation.