

Opening Remarks

Honourable Professor Pius P. Mbawala (MP),
Deputy Minister of Agriculture and Food Security

Your Excellency, Dr. Ali Mohamed Shein;
Vice President, United Republic of Tanzania

Mr. Chairman, Hon. Mussa Arne Silima
(MP); Minister of Agriculture, Natural
Resources, Environment and Cooperatives,
Zanzibar

Mr. Mohamed Babu; Regional
Commissioner, Arusha

Dr. Poulter; President of the International
Society for Tropical Root Crops (ISTRC)

Dr. Peter Hartman; Director General,
International Institute of Tropical
Agriculture (IITA)

Distinguished Scientists

Agro- Industrialists

Symposium Participants

Ladies and Gentlemen

1. On behalf of the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security (MAFS) and on my own behalf I feel greatly honoured to be here with you at the opening of the 13th Triennial Symposium of the International Society for Tropical Root Crops, May I, also commend members of the local organizing committee for successfully staging this Symposium here in Arusha.
2. The theme of the Symposium is on “Tropical Root and Tuber Crops: Opportunity for poverty alleviation and sustainable livelihoods in Developing Countries”. We in Tanzania recognize the importance of these crops. For instance, cassava is the leading root crop in the country ahead of sweetpotatoes, Irish potatoes, cocoyam and common yams. Currently, Tanzania is the fourth largest producer of cassava in Africa. However,

productivity of cassava in the past ten years (1991- 2001) has stagnated at between 8-10 tones per hectare which is equivalent to 2.0 to 2.5 tones of dried cassava per hectare. This yield is slightly below the continent’s average of 10 tones per hectare and much lower than the average yield of 14 tones per hectare obtained in Nigeria, the leading producer of cassava in the world. Potential fresh yields in Tanzania can reach 25 to 30 tons per hectare without inputs.

3. Mr. Chairman, root and tuber crops play a significant role in enhancing food security and providing cash income to many Tanzanians. According to a Dar es Salaam market survey conducted in June 2003 by the Tanzania Food and Nutrition Centre (TFNC), the average supply for cassava was 329,875 metric tones and fetched about she 21.7 million/= . The survey also showed that the annual average supply for sweetpotato was 26,726 metric tones and generated about Shs. 267/= million. That survey further showed that about 30% to 40% of cassava and 10% of sweetpotatoes produced is normally retained for domestic consumption.
4. The low yield of cassava in Tanzania, as compared to the existing potential, is attributed to a multitude of factors including:- use of varieties with low yield potential, incidence of diseases and insect pests such as African cassava mosaic virus (ACMV), cassava brown streak disease (CBSD), cassava bacterial blight (CBB), cassava green mite (CGM) and cassava mealybug (CM), poor crop husbandry, lack of secure markets and alternative uses of the crop.

5. Consequently, farmers need to be motivated to improve their management skills and embark on additional investments in order to improve productivity and quality of the produce. The challenge facing scientists and political leaders is therefore, how to develop a system, that will integrate the production of cassava, in the right amount, its transformation into easily storable product(s) that possess desirable quality attributes, and its marketing at prices consumers and other end-users are willing to pay. These are issues that feature high, in the agenda of this week long Symposium for the cooperation and continued support received from the International Centre for Potato Improvement (CIP) in developing control options against priority problems. We thank cassava farmers and scientists working on cassava and tubers.
6. Mr. Chairman, having briefly given these introductory remarks it is now my great pleasure and honour to humbly invite His Excellency Dr. Ali Mohamed Shein, The Vice President of the United Republic of Tanzania, to give his Opening Address and to also officially open this Symposium.

THANK YOU.