

**Presentation on “Empowering Smallholders through Food & Fruits
Production in Rural Asia and Africa”
by Eng. Wassfi Hassan El-Sreihin, Secretary General, AARDO**

Dr. Mohd Desa Hj Hassim, Chief Executive Officer,
International Tropical Fruits Network (TFNet)

Excellencies, Distinguish Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen

It is my pleasure to be here on this important occasion of
International Symposium on **Tropical Fruits Towards
Sustainable Fruit Production and Global Security.**

At the outset, I wish to convey my sincere gratitude to the
organizers especially to Dr. Mohd Desa Hj Hassim, Chief
Executive Officer, International Tropical Fruits Network
(TFNet) for selecting this important theme which is immensely
relevant in ensuring global food security.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I would like to focus on some of the challenges of small farmers and discuss the strategies to overcome these challenges.

I will also highlight the role of AARDO for empowering the smallholders, through its technical activities, especially human resource development/capacity building and financing of development pilot projects in African and Asian countries.

Agriculture remains the backbone of the economies of most of the African and Asian countries and contributes significantly to their economic growth and development.

It is equally home to the majority of the global agricultural population and plays a crucial role in their economies, and provides food, income and employment in rural areas. Farmers are predominantly marginal and small landholders, and the growth of agriculture sector is severely constrained by the low level of modern inputs adoption and limited access to improved technologies.

Rapid increase in food demand, unsustainable use of scarce resources and increased uncertainty are putting new pressures on agriculture and small farmers.

Today, one of the main global challenges is how to ensure food and nutrition security for a growing population whilst adjusting to an overall net increase of disasters, including those caused by climate change, and increased economic volatility, so as to eventually ensure long-term sustainable development.

During the past six decades, world population increased from 2.5 billion to 6 billion in 2000 and 7.0 billion mark in October 2011.

The world population is now projected to grow to 8.2 billion (2030) and 9.3 billion (2050). Nearly all of this increase will occur in the developing countries.

The per capita availability of arable land for food production has been decreasing and is expected to decline further from

0.23 hectares in 2000 to 0.15 hectares per person by 2050.

Income levels will be multiples of what they are now.

Thus, the increase in both population and income will require additional food production and also a shift in the types of food to be produced.

Therefore, the challenge is to produce enough food to meet the needs of increasing population while preserving and enhancing the natural resource- base upon which the well-being of present and future generations depend.

‘Noble laureate Late Norman Borlaug believed that average yield of all major food crops must be increased by 50% by 2025 if global food security needs are to be met.

To address the challenges, the agriculture sector in African and Asian countries is already undergoing significant transformation, where the relative importance of grains and staple foods are declining while that of high value food items such as fruits, vegetables, milk, meat and poultry are significantly increasing.

Consumers are getting more conscious about safety and nutritious value of the food.

In this scenario, food and fruits production will play an important role in providing essential vitamins, minerals, and dietary fiber to the world's population.

It will also provide food security and livelihood to the farmers of Asia and Africa. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), more than 90% of tropical fruits are grown in developing countries and significantly contribute to the income of smallholders. Therefore, it is considered that these high value crops may empower the small holders and leads apart from self consumption to sell in markets and generate significant income.

As high value agricultural products are comparatively perishable in nature, it requires greater coordination in the way the food is produced, transported, processed, marketed and consumed.

The small farmers are facing number of challenges relating to backward and forward linkages such as: production constraints; lack of comprehensive land policy; low investments; lack of post-harvest processing and storage facilities, as well as of appropriate marketing systems; and social and environmental constraints.

The expansion of the tropical fruits production relies on institutional support for the continuous improvements in production, postharvest, and marketing.

Nonetheless, despite all these challenges, the contribution of smallholder farmers to global food production is significant: they supply up to 50% of the worlds' cereal, 60% of the world's meat and 75% of the world's dairy production (Kremen et al., 2012).

Indeed, both urban and rural food consumers in developing countries count heavily on the efficiency of their local smallholder farmers to satisfy their food needs.

Within this figure, women who are the substantial majority of the smallholder farmers produce most of the food that is consumed locally.

Smallholders, as gross domestic food and nutrient providers have therefore a special role to play in the global efforts to improve food and nutrition security.

Incidentally, small-scale farmers have not been the primary focus of agricultural development, and their actual and potential contribution to food and nutrition security is not valorized as it deserves.

Addressing the challenges and increase the income of small farmers leading to their empowerment, it is needed to focus on the areas such as:

- Improving productivity
- Reducing pre and post harvest losses
- Improving farming efficiency
- Reducing cost of production
- Better market connect and price realization

- Value addition in the produce
- Allied farming activity
- Off farm enterprises

To enhance the role of smallholder farmers in food production and security, there is a need for the design of strategies and programmes backed by a firm national, regional and international commitment and conducive policy environment in which smallholder farmers, as key players, need to play a central role.

There are many examples worldwide showing that food security can effectively be met by smallholder farmers when governments are ready to give priority to the development of their agricultural sector through long-term strategies.

However, it needs commitment and it needs resources and investments and it needs good governance.

As stated in the 2012 Global Monitoring Report, in developing a twin-track approach to nutrition and food security, national

government need to plan long-term agricultural investments to raise productivity, especially for smallholder farmers, and to work across sectors, especially to link nutrition to health, agriculture, and social protection as well as other related sectors.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I wish to highlight the role and contribution of AARDO in promoting agriculture and empowering smallholders in African-Asian countries. Broadly, AARDO implements its programmes through capacity building and implementation of development pilot projects.

AARDO has **twenty five (25)** apex level Centers of Excellence in its **eleven (11)** member countries, namely Bangladesh, R.O. China (Taiwan), Egypt, India, R.O. Korea, Malaysia, Morocco, Nigeria, Pakistan, Philippines and Zambia for specialized trainings/workshops on various facets of rural and agricultural development.

Annually, AARDO provides around **four hundred (400)** fully-paid fellowships for specialized trainings ranging from one week to three months. Moreover, fellowships of one-year Post Graduate Diploma in Rural Development Management (PGDRDM) at NIRD, India; Master's Degree Programme at the Park Chung Hee School of Policy and Saemaul (PSPS) Yeungnam University, R.O. Korea; and Master's Degree & Ph.D. Programme at COMSATS Institute of Information Technology (CIIT), Islamabad, Pakistan are available for the nominees of the member countries.

In addition, AARDO organizes International/Regional workshops and seminars every year, where a considerable number of participants attend from its member countries.

Some of the topics of training specifically related to the subject are:

- 1) Planning and Promotion of Agro and Food Enterprises;
- 2) Promotion of Micro-Enterprises;

- 3) Animal Feed Production and Quality Assurance;
- 4) Modern Farming System in Broiler Production;
- 5) Fisheries Resources Management;
- 6) Advanced Technologies on Tropical and Sub-tropical Fruit Production and Post-harvest Techniques;
- 7) Micro-finance for Micro-enterprises: SHGs Approach;
- 8) Data Base Management Systems;
- 9) Training Methods and Skills;
- 10) Agricultural Services.

Besides, AARDO has organized the following international workshops having direct or indirect bearing on promotion of agriculture and empowerment of smallholders:

- 1) Rural Industrialization,
- 2) Promotion of Agro-business to Enhance the Income of Farm Households,
- 3) Strategies in Developing a Modern and Efficient Food Crops Sector;

- 4) Establishment of Marketing and Extension of Farm Produce;
- 5) Agricultural Technology Transfer and its Consequences;
- 6) Sustainable Farming - Ensuring Food Safety and Environmental Quality;
- 7) Challenges to Agriculture in the New Millennium;
- 8) WTO and its Impact on Agriculture;
- 9) Empowerment of Women through Rural Enterprises;
- 10) Micro-Entrepreneurship Development for Rural Women;
- 11) Income Generating Activities for Rural Families: Identification, Planning and Implementation;
- 12) Agriculture As a Business in Africa: A New Paradigm, and
- 13) Agribusiness Management and Marketing of Agricultural Produce of Small Farmers.

The recommendations of these workshops have been helping policy makers and planners in our member countries to

formulate their appropriate action plan on promotion of agriculture and empowerment of smallholders.

Financing of development pilot projects is also one of AARDO's important activities undertaken in its member countries.

The Organization lays emphasis on encouraging member countries to undertake such projects which significantly contribute in their rural economy through poverty alleviation, provision of good living conditions, creation of opportunities for income and employment generation, etc.

Since 1991, AARDO has financed more than **sixty (60)** development pilot projects in **twenty (20)** of its member countries.

As per modus operandi, AARDO's projects are implemented on cost sharing basis with the concerned host government/institutions as well as the beneficiaries.

These projects, among others, included:

- 1) Canning Factory of Juices, Fruits and Agricultural

- Products, Egypt (1992),
- 2) Palm Oil Processing and Soap Making, Ghana (1993),
 - 3) Coffee Processing Centre, Malaysia (1997),
 - 4) Farm Mushroom Production, Syria (2002),
 - 5) Cottage Industry & Small/Medium Enterprise Support Programme, Ghana (2003),
 - 6) Poultry Production for Rural Families, Oman (2005),
 - 7) Empower Youth with Entrepreneurship Skills, Zambia (2005),
 - 8) Women Entrepreneurship Development, Mauritius (2007),
 - 9) Poultry Production for Rural Female Headed Households, Malawi (2008),
 - 10) Empowering Chilli Producers in the South Tongu District to Meet Export Standards through Capacity Building and Supply of Inputs, Ghana (2010)

AARDO also disseminates information on promotion of agriculture and empowerment of smallholders through its own publications, website and library and documentation services.

In fact, African-Asian region offers huge potential for sustainable food production and promotion of food processing to enhance income of small farmers leading to their empowerment.

To tap this immense potential, strategies are needed to undertake policy reforms, institutional support, development of rural infrastructure, innovations in technologies, financial sector reforms, etc., to support small farmers who are the backbone of the farm economy.

I am sure that pertinent issues related to theme of the Symposium are being addressed during the various other technical sessions.

I wish all the delegates a fruitful deliberations and rewarding experience.

Finally, on behalf of AARDO and on my own behalf, may I repeat our gratitude to ----- for being with us during this session of Symposium. I also join other distinguished speakers in thanking the Organizing Team for its meticulous planning and unceasing efforts to ensure smooth conduct of the programme.

Thank you for your kind attention.