ASTI/IFPRI–FARA CONFERENCE
AGRICULTURAL R&D: INVESTING IN AFRICA'S FUTURE
Analyzing Trends, Challenges, and Opportunities
La Palm Royal Beach Hotel, Accra, Ghana — December 5-7, 2011

Opening remarks, 5th December, 2011

Irene Annor-Frempong on behalf of

Prof. Monty Jones, Executive Director of FARA.

Distinguished participants and learned colleagues,

First of all, I extend greetings from Prof. Monty Jones, the Executive Director of FARA, who would have very much loved to be here but for equally important commitments outside Accra and I particularly thank you for choosing Accra to host this important event.

Learned colleagues, we live in challenging times and the conference which has sought to bring such eminent scientist, researchers and managers together presents a golden opportunity for reflection, analysis and for identifying solutions for the way forward. .

Distinguished scientists, a global demand for accelerated agriculture productivity is necessary now than ever before and this requires political leadership and coordination to ensure the much needed pro-poor and sustainable food security.

In that last decade or so, agriculture has been re-emerged as an essential element of economic growth in developing countries where food security also relates to broader security concerns. From global perspective, developing countries and middle-income economies are playing an increasingly important role in the agri-food system. The agricultural sector in Africa currently contributes 20 to 40 percent of overall GDP and employs 60 percent of the labor force Higher incomes and urbanization are raising food spending in developing countries whilst the United States and Western Europe's share of world agricultural production has decreased by 9% and 19 % , respectively in the past 20 years,

Yet Africa is so ill-prepared to respond adequately to this demand as it is unable to make the needed prior investments in research and development (R&D), services, and input supply systems. In new market dynamics of bio-fuels and CO2 sequestration, developing countries are unable to provide agricultural support on a scale needed for rapid agricultural growth. Studies over the past several decades suggest that typically, a price increase of 10% results in only a 1-percent increase in aggregate agriculture production the supply response takes time because the increased production needs to come from higher yields (and not from area expansion) and from increased productivity in the livestock sector. Total factor productivity tends to be at about 1 to 1.2 percent per annum at current research expenditures.

Colleagues, as many have described it, the world is facing a more complex agricultural crisis than the ones of the 1960s or the 1880s resulting from a combination of economic, environmental, and political factors at a time when world population of increasing and technology has provided a better-informed world. Today, agriculture policy is increasingly being made outside the domain of agriculture.

Technology has been a critical component in preventing population growth from outpacing agricultural production. The global environment for innovation is also changing. However, agriculture and technological innovation for agricultural productivity have not moved high enough on the agenda. The persistence of poverty in the rural areas of low- and middle-income countries, of high food prices undermining livelihoods, and of deficiencies in the sustainability of agriculture require large-scale actions at all levels.

There is need for collaboration between north and south institutions to improve local research capacity. All actors have important roles to play in ensuring that the problem of underinvestment in agricultural research and development is resolved. Human resource capacity for agricultural R&D has been cited often as a major cause for Africa's under-achievements. The current NARS arrangement is largely incapable of addressing these issues in a coherent manner. The NARS face grave weaknesses of coordination at national level; There are inadequate mechanisms to establish priorities and lack of a national system to allocate resources to priorities. There is also lack of institutionalized monitoring, evaluation and impact.

Confronting new priorities in a rapidly changing and adapting to changes within a more complex innovation systems framework where there is a greater number of actors and linkages to consider, requires redefining the role of government in agricultural research and service provision and the role of the private sector, civil society and end users. Strengthening the demand side of agricultural research and services to ensure that programmes are more responsive and accountable to end users, but also anticipating demand as new and emerging technologies dominate the landscape. Developing a clear understanding of the institutional structures needed at the national, regional and sub-regional levels for agricultural research and service provision and of whether, and how, this understanding would imply changes in the current structures present at national, regional and global levels.

The African Agriculture Agenda envisages science and technology as a key driver of agricultural productivity growth. This is evident in the fact that one of the CAADP pillars (Pillar IV) aims at bringing agricultural research, technology dissemination and adoption to bear on productivity growth. The policy context of the continental priorities for enhancing agricultural productivity therefore, is one which places agricultural research, technology dissemination and adoption at the forefront of African agricultural productivity growth.

Africa's new vision for a transforming, productive and economically sustainable agricultural sector under CAADP currently provides Africa the best chance, so far, for economic growth. It enjoins governments to (i) scale-up investments in agricultural research and development to promote the development, dissemination and adoption of innovations and (ii) create the enabling policy and institutional environment and conducive markets as incentives for private sector involvement in agricultural research and development by promoting access to knowledge and technologies; delivering better advisory services to farmers; building the human and institutional

capacity for agricultural development; strengthening the capacity of agricultural research and development institutions; producing high caliber agricultural professionals; empowering rural communities; creating the required partnerships and strategic alliances; and creating enabling policies and conducive markets as incentives for increasing agricultural productivity.

It is against these critical global and continental issues that I find the analysis and discussion on the themes of this conference; investments in R&D, human resource development , Aligning and rationalizing institutionalization of structures for R and D, and measurement and improving of effectiveness of R and D critical to resolving Africa's underachievement in alleviating food insecurity, apt for discussion.

Learned colleagues and distinguished participants, you can see why this conference is a key to FARA's work in leading CAADP pillar 4 and I look forward to the fruitful deliberations and the solutions that will emerge from this conference as I believe these will make important contribution to the implementation of FAAP in guiding the agricultural research, technology dissemination and adoption in Africa.

Once again welcome to Accra and wish you a successful conference.

I thank you.