

OPENING ADDRESS**STRENGTHENING INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION IN CASSAVA
RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS**

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Good morning distinguished guests,
Ladies and gentlemen,

Today, scientists and distinguished guests from different countries in Asia, Latin America and Africa come to Ho Chi Minh City, the second largest city of Vietnam, and take part in the Sixth Asian Cassava Workshop. On behalf of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, I warmly welcome all of you in the spring of the year 2000, the transitional year to the new century.

Vietnam ranks 13th in the world in terms of cassava production and 4th in terms of cassava exports. Exports of cassava starch are now reaching 100-180 thousand tonnes a year. Major markets of Vietnam's cassava exports are the P.R of China and Taiwan, Japan, Korea and countries in Eastern Europe. In the past ten years, cassava research and development in Vietnam have made significant progress. Cassava yield and production in several provinces has doubled, which has brought about the construction of new large-scale cassava processing factories, especially in the south of Vietnam. This has helped farmers to increase their income and generated more employment. This workshop provides an opportunity for scientists, educational instructors, extension workers, cassava producing and processing enterprises, businessmen and managers, to see and learn from each other, and to exchange experiences.

During the years 2000-2010, the production of food crops will remain the mainstay of Vietnam's agriculture, with the goals of: 1) to guarantee the security and stability of the national food supply, to increase food reserves so sufficient food is available for local consumption; 2) to produce an abundant supply of feed stuff for the development of livestock production with a growth of 8-10% a year, and sufficient raw materials for the processing industry; and 3) to increase agricultural exports with high efficiency and at competitive prices. Among the main food crops, the Vietnamese government focuses on the development of rice, maize, cassava, potato and sweetpotato in the most suitable regions and cropping seasons. Cassava plays an important role in livestock production and in the processing industry.

Research in breeding and selection of cassava varieties/cultivars that have high starch yields, in establishing sustainable and profitable pilot farms in cassava production, in providing a stable source of raw materials for processing, in diversifying of processed commodities, in finding and developing potential cassava markets, is all very important. I do believe this workshop will provide useful information on cassava research and development at present and in the coming years as well.

On this opportunity, I wish the workshop a good success, I wish all of you good health, and a pleasant and interesting stay in Ho Chi Minh City.

I have the honor to hereby declare the opening of the
Workshop.