

Welcome Remarks by
H. E. Mr. Akio Egawa, Ambassador of Japan to Zambia
On the Occasion of the NERICA Rice Luncheon Meeting
Lusaka, 16th August, 2013

Hon. Greyford Monde, MP, Deputy Minister of Agriculture and Livestock,
Mr. Siazongo D. Syakalenge, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock,
Senior Officials of the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock present,
Representatives of Cooperating Partners,
Representatives of Agricultural Stakeholders,
Mr. Yoshihide Teranishi, Resident Representative, JICA Zambia Office,
Members of the Media,
Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to welcome you all to my residence today and thank you most sincerely for taking the time to attend this special event.

It goes without saying that agriculture is a key sector for Zambia's economic development and the Government of the Republic of Zambia has rightly placed priority to the promotion of agriculture. The Government has made steady efforts to promote crop diversification with a view to ensuring food security and improved agricultural production, including the reforms in the two main subsidy programs.

The Government of Japan also attaches priority to agriculture in its country assistance policy for the Republic of Zambia, which has been formulated in alignment with Zambia's development policies and programs.

Since as far back as the 1980s, Japan has consistently extended its development assistance to Zambia's agricultural sector in irrigation, crop diversification and other areas. Currently, Japan is cooperating in three projects in the agriculture sector. Let me give you an outline of these projects.

First, the Rural Extension Service Capacity Advancement Project (RESCAP) has been implemented in Northern, Western and Lusaka Provinces since 2009. RESCAP is aimed at improving rural extension services provided by the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock. Recently, the Government of the Republic of Zambia employed hundreds of new extension officers in line with its commitment announced earlier. I am pleased to note that, for the first time in 10 years, a training course for new extension officers has resumed. A special program was aired recently on ZNBC television on this training course.

Second, the Technical Cooperation Project on Community-based Smallholder Irrigation (T-COBSI) has just begun this year in Luapula and Northern Provinces. The objective of T-COBSI is to transfer small irrigation technology to officials and extension officers of the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock and to improve agricultural production through promoting irrigated agriculture, utilizing community-based smallholder irrigation schemes. The preceding COBSI study project, which ended last year, has resulted in the expansion of the irrigated area to a total of 1,000 hectares during only 2 rainy seasons even though each irrigated area is only about 5 hectares at most. We expect much more effective and efficient transfer of small irrigation technology will be carried out under the ongoing T-COBSI.

Third, the Food Crop Diversification Support Project Focusing on Rice Production (FODIS-R) has been implemented in 6 provinces since last year. FODIS-R is aimed at strengthening the capacity of researchers of the Zambia Agriculture Research Institute (ZARI) and extension officers of the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock in rice cultivation technology. April 2013 saw the first harvest season since the project started and the crop yield in some areas recorded as much as 3 to 4 tons per hectare for both upland rice and paddy rice, far exceeding Zambia's average of 0.9 tons per hectare.

In addition, another ODA project called the 'Project for Developing Agriculture and Farmers' Organizations' has been carried out since 2011 under the auspices of the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries of Japan. The project is aimed at better organizing farmers and transferring technology on soil improvement. We expect that the project will positively impact crop diversification through synergy with the aforementioned projects implemented

by JICA.

Furthermore, the Government of Japan will support the development of agricultural production and crop diversification in peri-urban areas. This is in line with Japan's commitment to support empowerment of farmers as mainstream economic actors, which was announced at TICADV. A preparatory study on the Kanakantapa irrigation project is currently being carried out by JICA.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

At TICADIV, the Government of Japan also announced its support to “Doubling rice production in Sub-Sahara Africa to 28million tons by 2018”. This means stepping up efforts of the Government of Japan to support rice production in Zambia and other African countries, building on the efforts already being made through CARD (Coalition for African Rice Development).

There has recently been a rapid increase in the demand for rice in Zambia, especially in the urban areas. The Government of the Republic of Zambia is making steady efforts to promote rice production, including the formulation of the NRDS (National Rice Development Strategy) in September 2011. However, Zambia's rice production still stands at approximately 40 thousand tons per year against the estimated 60 thousand-ton demand.

In view of this, JICA started ‘FODIS-R’ project in June 2012 upon request from the Zambian Government. The project supports productivity improvement of native Zambian rice species as well as production of NERICA Rice, upland rice variety developed specifically to fit for cultivation in Africa. NERICA stands for New Rice for Africa. Today we have here the JICA Experts engaged in agricultural cooperation. They will be able to share with us more detailed insights into the benefits of NERICA.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Today, we are serving NERICA Rice produced in the project target area of FODIS-R along with some delicious side dishes or ‘relishes’ to go with the

NERICA Rice such as Japanese-style curry and Japanese beef stew as well as Japanese-style chicken rice with tomato source. I hope you will enjoy these special meals.

We are also serving “sake”, Japanese wine made from rice.

It is my hope that NERICA Rice will play a significant role in championing crop diversification in Zambia in the efforts to attain robust agriculture that will bring about accelerated economic development of Zambia.

Thank you very much for your kind attention.