



30 May 2013

*International Forum on Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems
(GIAHS)*

Ishikawa Public Forum - Japan

Governor Masanori Tanimoto,
Mayor, Nanao City
Mr Toyokazu Fukushima
Your Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates and guests,

Since I took up office in January 2012 I have stressed the importance of working together to promote food security and have pushed FAO in the direction of strengthening and building new partnerships.

In this effort, just recently we have approved strategies for engagement with the civil society and the private sector.

So I welcome and am impressed by Ishikawa's efforts to build partnerships with private sector companies, like Toyota Motor Corporation, which has worked to develop Noto's "Smart Drive" Project, for sustainable tourism in the region.

I also appreciate the creation of the Satoyama-related business to brand local organic products, which adds value to rice and rice-terrace conservation.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In the past, today, and in the future, agricultural heritage plays an important role in guaranteeing sustainable food production systems and to the livelihoods and



food security of small scale and family farmers, fishers, indigenous peoples and local communities that are using traditional and sustainable agricultural practices to play a part in feeding the world.

Local cultures have been using traditional methods to feed the world for millennia. They have nurtured, conserved, and shared with us thousands of cultivated species that have enabled humans to adapt to a wide range of environments.

These species are the legacy of our ancestors, and they hold hope for our children's children.

But today, in many cases, they are threatened by climate change and deteriorating ecosystems.

We cannot afford to lose this agricultural heritage, that is an example of how we should try to produce food – increasing productivity while preserving the environment.

This is as important today as it will be in the future: FAO estimates that we will need to increase food production by 60 percent until 2050.

Many local agricultural systems have been saving and growing for centuries, adapting to changes in natural, social and economic conditions.

We need the traditions of the past to help us lay down the roots of innovation for the future.

If we lose unique, and irreplaceable, agricultural heritage, it will be more difficult for us to adapt to climate change. More difficult to produce nutritious, healthy and varied diets that are appropriate for local cultures.



We have much to learn from our agricultural heritage. This is one reason why the Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems (GIAHS) was formed 10 years ago as an international partnership.

Protecting and learning from agricultural heritage systems like Noto's Satoyama and Satoumi, is one of the keys to sustainability.

These two systems show us how we can produce and preserve the environment and a traditional way of doing things that has worked and sustained generations for centuries. These are systems that help build resilience and secure biodiversity future generations.

The conservation of natural and biological diversity is one of the foundations of sustainable development. And agricultural heritage systems also contribute to the economic and social dimensions of sustainable development.

To conserve these systems and their value for the future, we need to continue raising awareness of the pivotal role that small-scale farmers, fishers and other producers play in building a bridge to a sustainable future.

This is a work to which FAO is committed to and which is close to the heart of our mission of working towards a hunger-free and sustainable world.

And to raise awareness we need more successful stories, like the case of Noto's Peninsula. Stories that show us how to create a harmonious link between traditional agriculture and modern industries.

Ladies and gentlemen

We can and should provide farmers with the tools and means to sustainably manage the natural resources that are rooted in these traditional systems, which have supported local livelihoods and food security for centuries.



But no one can do this alone.

Dynamic conservation of GIAHS is a collaborative effort that requires the commitment of us all. Governments, private sector companies, academic and research institutions, community organizations.

Its successful implementation also requires resources. I encourage every one of you to dedicate, your time and efforts, but also join forces to encourage greater financial support from governments and donors.

By working to conserve their agricultural heritage, the Japanese are setting a fine and informative example in how to revitalize the countryside, and drive local sustainable development.

I urge everyone to take a look and learn from their innovative activities. And I also look forward to learning from all of you about your own efforts in this regard.

I encourage you all to deepen your understanding of Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems during your stay in Noto, and to take what you see here and share it with others.

Your presence here today will help our efforts to ensure a sustainable present and future for us all. Thank you.