



5 June 2013

National Awards Ceremony

Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems (GIAHS)

Your Excellency Mr. Niu Dun, Vice-Minister of Agriculture,

Governors,

Professors,

Distinguished delegates and guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is an honour for me to be here in Beijing, for the designation of China's two new Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems.

The Kuaijishan Ancient Chinese Torreya is more than 2000 years old. Due to the ancient grafting techniques used, its trees have provided an important source of nutrition and income for centuries.

The Xuanhua Traditional Vineyards go back more than 1300 years and are a model for soil and water conservation.

These sites show inventive and efficient ways in which different communities have combined protection of the local environment and biodiversity, with production of food and the preservation of their culture and traditional livelihoods.

These contributions are crucial to FAO's efforts to eradicate hunger and malnutrition, and improve food security in sustainable ways.



FAO's Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems (GIAHS) was formed ten years ago as an international partnership to identify, support and safeguard these systems.

The continued success of this program will depend on the recognition that small-scale farmers, fishers and other producers must be central to any effort to preserve and adapt traditional knowledge, and to develop innovative new techniques.

Production from small-scale producers accounts for the majority of the food consumed in developing countries and they represent the main day-to-day managers of the world's natural ecosystems and biodiversity.

But at the same time, they also are among the world's most vulnerable populations.

They need support in order to fully contribute to food security, conservation of natural resources, and sustainable rural development.

China is doing much work in this area. You have organized more than 20 symposia and training workshops, and you conduct continuous research and development activities.

Also, last year, the Chinese Ministry of Agriculture launched and adopted the Nationally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems.

This was a moment of great satisfaction for FAO's Technical Cooperation Program. It showed how a program with great impact could lead to the adoption of new policies at the country level.

With the two newly-designated sites, China now has a total of eight agricultural heritage sites. The others are:

The Qingtian Rice-fish Culture, the very first site in the global system;

The Hani Rice Terrace System;

The Wannian Rice Culture System;

The rice-fish-duck production system, developed over many years by the Dong people;

The Aohan Dryland Farming System; and,

The Puér tea agrosystem.



I want to congratulate the people who work in these agricultural heritage systems and are responsible for the dynamic conservation of these sites.

Finally, I would like to thank the Ministry of Agriculture for its active participation in this and other initiatives, including expansion of the South-South Cooperation program. Through South-South activities, you are sharing your knowledge with other countries.

I am confident that our joint efforts will help us to build a more sustainable and food secure future.

Thank you.