

Statement on behalf of CAB International (CABI)

**Food and Agriculture Organisation High-Level Conference on World Food
Security: The Challenges of Climate Change and Bioenergy, Rome, 3 – 5
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**Delivered by Dennis Rangi
Executive Director, International Development**

Mr. Chairman

Director General FAO

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

CABI is greatly honoured to be invited to this high level conference to address world food security. CABI is here as an intergovernmental not-for-profit organisation of more than 40 member countries, dedicated to improving people's lives worldwide by providing information and applying scientific expertise to solve problems in agriculture and the environment. In our support to member countries we have three focus areas: invasive species, reduce the spread and impact of invasive species; commodities, enabling smallholder commodity growers to compete in global markets, and knowledge for development, empowering the rural poor to make informed decisions to optimize incomes and livelihoods and strengthening institutional, national and regional agriculture and environment systems through developing their knowledge management approaches.

In the last six months we have carried out three regional consultations with our member countries, and as a result have been mandated to support developing countries with regard to issues relating to climate change and biofuels.

CABI participated in the Expert Meeting on *Climate-related transboundary pests and diseases*, including relevant aquatic species, in February this year. CABI

welcomes and endorses the technical report and the options for decision makers from this meeting.

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

CABI believes and endorses:

- Climate change is a cross-cutting international environmental issue which will have a dramatic effect on the distribution and abundance of many species, including the spread, establishment and impact of transboundary pests.
- Climate change, particularly soil water deficits and rainfall irregularity, coupled with greater use of marginal land for crop production, will render crops more prone to invasive species.
- With climate change, pest ranges may enlarge and new opportunities (e.g. niches) will be created that will enable existing and new transboundary pests to establish.
- Climate change and transboundary pests will therefore interact synergistically, greatly threatening food security in the developing world. Climate change will negatively affect food production, vulnerability to pests, food storage and distribution (geographic and transportation).
- Action through capacity building, education, research and implementation is needed now to mitigate the threat. Mitigation is an urgent priority BUT has to be understood to be a “stop gap” response. Adaptation is the main route map that needs implementing, for example, through CABI’s farmer field schools to encourage uptake of indigenous systems developed in other countries such as the Burkina Faso Zai system, which improves soil water availability to crops. Other methods involve making weather forecasts available to farmers to enable timely planting, or promoting the use of shorter season or drought resistant crop varieties to cope with rainfall unpredictability.

- The development of monitoring and early warning systems are urgently needed and are being developed, for example, work led by CABI on armyworm threats in Tanzania and the role of CABI's Global Plant Clinic in informing farmers of emerging diseases and their management, such as bacterial wilt of bananas in Uganda. CABI can also assist farmers in identifying plant pests and diseases and recommend management strategies.
- Trade in horticultural/ornamental species needs to be heavily regulated and monitored.
- CABI believes that prevention is not possible. Moderate mitigation to “buy-time” is possible but the threat of transboundary pests, enhanced by climate change, is too great for a preventative strategy to be implemented.
- Adaptive strategies need to involve international co-operation and include research and development on monitoring, prediction, outbreak triggers, risk assessment and management strategies. Such approaches need to be developed at the regional scale.
- Traditional transboundary pest management approaches need modification, IPM must be adapted to deal with a changing climate and new pests and diseases.

Just one example of an area where CABI is making an important contribution:

Musa spp, are important staples in the humid and sub humid zones of Africa. They are affected by: root nematodes, causing uprooting and total yield loss; black sigatoka leaf streak (*Mycosphaerella fijiensis*) which might increase its range to higher altitude areas if temperatures increase, banana weevil (*Cosmopolites sordidus*), and, bacterial wilt of banana.

Bacterial wilt of banana is severe. It first appeared in East Africa in 2001 and causes plant death within one month. It is controlled by immediate cutting of the plant, digging out of the corm and burying of all plant parts.

With its network of mobile plant clinics, CABI can inform farmers about these pests and diseases. While weevils are recognized by farmers, root nematodes and black sigatoka are not well understood. Farmers can be informed about methods to reduce impact and spread, such as boiling water treatment of suckers to kill nematodes.

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

In concluding, CABI is working on the interaction of climate change on CABI's global themes of Invasive Alien Species, Commodities and Knowledge for Development. With partner organisations and development assistance agencies, CABI is developing and implementing capacity building, particularly in relation to food security, including the management of invasive species, the sustainable production of key agricultural commodities and the distribution and use of knowledge transfer technology. A key, all encompassing area for CABI is building the capacity of African producers in sustainable agriculture and climate change.

Thus, CABI expects to make a significant contribution to the area of climate-related transboundary pests, working with our member countries and other partners, applying our expertise in our focus areas: invasive species, commodities and knowledge for development.

Thank you and on behalf of CABI and its member countries I thank you for this opportunity to participate and address the conference.

CABI International

4th June 2008.