

**Ceremony of the presentation of the *Agricola Medal*
to**

**H.E. Wen Jiabao,
Premier of the State Council,
The People's Republic of China
*Beijing, China, 2 October 2012***

NOMINATIONS TO BE CONFIRMED

Thank you Your Excellency Mr. Han, Minister of Agriculture
of the People's Republic of China

Your Excellency, Premier of the State Council of the
People's Republic of China Mr. Wen Jiabao,

Distinguished guests,

Ladies and gentlemen

I want to start by thanking Premier Wen for the hospitality and the warm welcome I am receiving in my first official mission to China as Director-General of FAO.

I am confident this represents an important step in the strengthening of our co-operation to defeat hunger and promote sustainable development in China and in the world.

Be assured of FAO's and my personal commitment to working with China to reach the goal of a sustainable, food-secure world.

Mr. Wen, Ladies and gentlemen,

It is a great honor and privilege for me to present you with the *Agricola Medal*, the highest distinction of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations.

This medal is struck in your honor. By conferring it, FAO wishes to pay tribute to your life-long dedication to promoting food security and poverty reduction in the People's Republic of China, and in the world.

The medal includes a quote from Your Excellency, which reads: "One who knows not Chinese farmers, knows not China".

These wise words are not bound within the frontiers of China, Your Excellency. They can be said of farmers and societies everywhere in the world.

This is the second time that a Chinese statesman has been awarded the *Agricola Medal*, the first time it was awarded to the former President Jiang Zemin. And China is the only country to have received this distinction twice.

Today, FAO stands as witness to China's tremendous achievement in improving food security both for its 1.3 billion citizens and for the world.

China feeds 21 percent of the planet's population with only 9 percent of the world's arable land, and only 6 percent of the world's available freshwater resources.

China's grain output has grown steadily for the last eight years. This has contributed significantly not only to national but also international food security and extreme poverty reduction.

The efforts of China to feed its own people and to end extreme poverty have a global impact. Let me give you one number that illustrates the magnitude of this contribution:

The number of poor in the world fell from 2.3 billion in 1990 to 1.5 billion in 2008, a reduction of 34.1%.

A World without China would have progressed much more slowly, with a reduction of only about 11% of the number of poor over the same period.

Premier Wen, under your leadership China has made great strides in the fields of food security and agriculture.

Thanks to the Government's continued efforts, China ranks first in the world in the output of many agricultural products, including grains, meat, poultry, eggs, fruit, and aquatic products.

China has also become a key driver in the increasingly important South-South cooperation. The

country plays a vital role in the on-going development dialogue between countries in the global south, as highlighted during the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation, that took place in July of this year.

Your Excellency,

With your guidance, the Chinese government has continued to build on its achievements and makes plans for a still better future through reform and innovation.

China's national strategy for agricultural development places the rural sector and modern farming at the center of its plans for the years ahead.

These policies increase support for small-scale farmers, enhance research and extension in agriculture, and boosts overall investment in the agricultural sector.

Altogether, these decisions bring China closer to its goal of self sufficiency in food production.

Please accept, therefore, this *Agricola Medal* as a token of FAO's admiration, and of my personal esteem, for all that you are doing to eradicate poverty and hunger both at home and internationally.

Your efforts represent a key contribution to the eradication of hunger and the improvement of many millions of lives – setting a fine example for all of us to follow.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

May I now call on you, Your Excellency Mr. Wen Jiabao, Premier of the State Council of the People's Republic of China, to receive the *Agrícola Medal*.