



منظمة الأغذية  
والزراعة  
للأمم المتحدة

联合国  
粮食及  
农业组织

Food  
and  
Agriculture  
Organization  
of  
the  
United  
Nations

Organisation  
des  
Nations  
Unies  
pour  
l'alimentation  
et  
l'agriculture

Продовольственная и  
сельскохозяйственная  
организация  
Объединенных  
Наций

Organización  
de las  
Naciones  
Unidas  
para la  
Agricultura  
y la  
Alimentación

## OPENING ADDRESS

by

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delivered at the

**Expert Meeting on Crop Monitoring for Improved Food Security**

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**Distinguished Experts, Participants and Representatives from Partner Institutions,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

It gives me immense pleasure to extend a warm welcome to all the distinguished experts and participants from premier institutions in the region attending this meeting on *Crop Monitoring for Improved Food Security*. First of all, I wish to express our special gratitude to the Government of Lao PDR for hosting this important gathering here today. I am happy to note that over 40 experts from many countries within and outside the Asia Pacific region have come together to support the cause of improving agricultural statistics for the eradicating hunger and malnutrition.

I am thankful for your keen interest in the themes of the meeting and for travelling long distances to participate in this event despite your busy schedule. FAO and ADB are privileged to host you and benefit from your expertise and long experience in this area. Working together, sharing and pooling knowledge with you will indeed have a lasting impact on the methods being practiced in countries of this region for producing reliable and timely estimation of crop production, and for monitoring of crop condition to ensure timely action for ensuring food security.

I am delighted to acknowledge the ADB's acceptance of our request to jointly organize this event with FAO, and its contribution to this meeting at a very short notice. I am also thankful to other international organizations like AFSIS and IRRI, and national institutions like GISTDA, NCFC, SPARRSO, SUPRCO, JAXA, and the important institutions from China, Indonesia and Iran for their deep interest and technical contribution to this event.

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

FAO is mandated to combat hunger, food insecurity and malnutrition which is our first strategic objective. FAO is the lead agency to monitor the progress towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) hunger indicator, aiming to reduce the proportion of undernourished people by half by 2015. Besides eradication of hunger, food insecurity and malnutrition, FAO's new Strategic Objectives focus on sustainability of agriculture, reduction of rural poverty, and increasing resilience of livelihoods to threats and crisis. Above all, our activities are now to be aligned to meeting the "Zero Hunger" challenge.

I am sure you will all agree that availability of precise and timely information on the demand and supply of agricultural production is crucial to our fight against hunger, food insecurity and malnutrition. This meeting is, therefore, of particular importance to FAO as it will assist member countries to build their capacities to produce timely and reliable information for mitigating food insecurity related risks and for planning necessary government interventions and programmes.

Incorporation of latest technological tools such as GIS, remote sensing, GPS instruments and PDAs in the data collection methods will not only bring about an improvement in quality and reliability of data available at national level but also go a long way in meeting regional and international data requirements for better development outcomes.

I am glad to see that the meeting has kept a specific focus on the use of remote sensing technology which has tremendous potential in conjunction with statistical methodologies. It has important use in estimation of crop area and in forecasting yield, as well as for making rapid assessment of impact of natural disasters, such as drought and floods, on the livelihood of the affected people. In promoting the technology we need to be conscious of its cost-effectiveness and affordability for less developed countries.

#### **Fellow Experts,**

I am particularly keen to see that you come up with a critical review of information gaps, methodological issues and best practices available at the country, regional and global level, and your well-considered recommendations to FAO on the suitability of available techniques in diverse situations prevailing in the countries of the region.

I am confident that conclusions and recommendations of this one day expert deliberations will help member countries on the choice of the most appropriate methodology in their specific conditions using latest technology for improving the crop production data. Your conclusions will also help FAO and ADB to allocate resources to specific types of research required to develop and refine methodologies, which is one of the components of Global Strategy to Improve Agricultural and Rural Statistics.

#### **Ladies and Gentlemen,**

FAO values the regional partnership with ADB, ESCAP and SIAP in implementation of the Global Strategy, which is a long term effort. We now have a shared Regional Action Plan to improve agricultural and rural statistics. Though it has received initial donor support, more resources and partnerships need to be found for sustaining the activities foreseen in the plan in the long run. I hope this meeting will contribute to building new alliances for improving methodologies.

I can clearly see today's deliberations will contribute to one of the identified research priorities of the Global Strategy. I am sure your recommendations will assist countries in making critical choices in development of their Strategic Plans for Agricultural and Rural Statistics (SPARS), proposed as part of Technical Assistance component of the Regional Action Plan of the Global Strategy.

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Finally, let me acknowledge the hard work of the colleagues in ADB, and SAEDA together with those of FAORAP for the successful preparation and organization of this meeting.

I wish you all success in your discussions and a pleasant stay in Vientiane.

Thank you.