

Inaugural Address

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Dr. Muhammad Saeed, Dr. F. A. Nehvi from Siri Nagar Kashmir, Dr. Kim from South Korea, Prof. Dr. Abdul Salam (Dean faculty of Agriculture, UAF), Prof. Dr. Muhammad Amjad (Director, Institute of Horticulture Sciences), Prof. Dr. Muhammad Jafar Jaskani (Organizing Secretary of the Conference), distinguished guests, students, faculty colleagues, ladies and gentlemen this is my proud privilege to welcome you to the university at the “2nd International Conference on Horticulture Sciences” where the theme of the day is “Production challenges and food security”.

Food security has been discussed and this stage is set by Dr. Saeed. You have seen the figures and the challenges that we are facing. We would like to add few words to that by saying that this issue of food security was realized about 140 years ago through a commission by the name of “Famine Commission” constituted by the British colonial power back in 1870’s and we have only changed this name from famine to food security and the challenge remains alive as it was ever before. The reasons are obvious that we have a constant pressure built on the natural resources by way of over-population and exploitation of a fixed endowment in the form of land, water and natural resources. There is very impressive history of gains if we look at food availability in the early years of this country. This nation, according to 1951 census, had 35 million people and today our population is around 200 million people. And, if you see at per capita availability of calories, you can see diversity in food, you see affordability of people and accessibility to it. It is far higher than it was 50 or 60 years ago. Nevertheless, we have equally daunting challenges of making sure that not only we sustain the current food security arrangement but also improve upon what we have. The significant challenge in food security, which country is now facing, is not calories but how to balance the food or the nutrition or how to make the food nutritious and that’s where horticultural production has a significant role to play. And again, look at our major fruits, the trends that have evolved over time. There are some major fruits which are available in plenty and they are affordable. Same is the case with vegetables. Look at the potato, for the last 2 consecutive years, farmers are unable to sell and we have plenty in there and the story goes on. But, when we look at the nutritional surveys which have been published by reliable entities. There are figures something like 40% malnourished women and children, the most vulnerable segment of the society. We are faced with a potentially stunted and retarded population and that has not happened just because of lack of calories but because of lack of balance in the nutrition. Majority of our population is vitamin-deficient, mineral-deficient and anaemic. These are some of the challenges which are to be attended by diversification in diet and by balancing the dietary composition.

We know that the agriculture in this country is somehow not entirely geared towards accepting that challenge. We are focused on macro-economics through administrative and political influence and thus we are stuck with five crops. In fact, four crops have the stage patronage whereas the corn emerged because of good mix of market forces. There is demand for corn products in the poultry industry and there is technology which enabled significant gains in case of corn but other four crops are actually manipulated crops and this manipulation will continue because it has definitely served

the purpose and it has served the policy. This was state's policy to make sure that there is sufficient flour, sugar and cooking oil in the market and there is at least one vibrant industrial sector to provide jobs and that is textile industry. However, we know requirement of population in the form of flour, sugar, cooking oil, cotton and textile will always remain our superior choices but to be able to fully address to the food security challenge, we don't want to give up on these political options and horticulture must play its role.

I would like to congratulate Institute of Horticulture Science for organizing this very impressive "2nd International Conference on Horticultural Sciences". My compliment to the entire team Prof. Dr. Muhammad Amjad, Prof. Dr. Muhammad Jafar Jaskani and other faculty colleagues in the institute. And we are also grateful to the sponsors which Prof. Dr. Muhammad Amjad has mentioned and we are also very excited and happy to have all of you with us for next three days and we hope that your presence will certainly provide an opportunity and wealth of knowledge as Prof. Dr. Muhammad Amjad mentioned that we have 96 oral presentations which is impressive. We have also more than 120 poster presentations which shows the enthusiasm and the participation from full range of institutions from across the country and our international collaborators. It also includes a very significant contribution by students and younger component of the society. In addition to this available wealth of knowledge, we believe that there will be new ideas which you will be sharing during course of next three days and this is an opportunity for all of you to network and prepare for better days ahead of us.

Before I close, I would like to compliment Dr. Saeed for bringing in some of the nostalgic moments mentioning the name who were the pioneers of today's setup. This institution (University of Agriculture, Faisalabad) was originally created as Punjab Agriculture College back in 1906 and then elevated as West Pakistan Agricultural University, Lyallpur in 1961. Today, there are nine agricultural universities in the country and there are 20 different colleges and institutes which are imparting education and training and developing human resource, and we are proud of all of these developments. We believe that we have at least contributed towards expansion of this human resource development system in the country. We are proud to be one of the oldest and the parent organization to many of the research organizations within the national agriculture research system as well as we have our presence in every corner of the world. Today in our horticulture institute, I believe that we have about 26 PhD faculty members and we have similar setups available in nearly all agriculture universities and colleges. The human resource is simply magnificent and we believe that this human resource is our biggest stake. This is where we have the highest hopes and these events will eventually galvanize the human resource development process. It galvanizes the process of change and I hope that, after three days, we will all go wiser and we will have reason to celebrate and think ahead of us and ahead of time. And, I hope you will enjoy the hospitality and if there are any deficiencies please forgive me on behalf of the institution.

Thank you very much.