

Uganda



**Rt. Hon. Kirunda Kivejinja, Second Deputy
Prime Minister Of The Republic Of Uganda And
Minister Of East African Community Affairs**

ON

**THE OCCASSION OF OPENING THE ASARECA COUNCIL OF PATRON
MINISTERS SUMMIT**

**SPEKE RESORT AND CONFERENCE CENTRE, MUNYONYO, KAMPALA
3RD MAY 2019**

Hon. Ministers Present

Her Excellency, the Commissioner for Rural Economy and Agriculture at the African

Your Excellencies, the Secretary Generals of Regional Economic Communities

Your Excellencies, Members of the Diplomatic Corps,

Hon. Members of Parliament Present,

Permanent Secretaries Present,

Members of Diplomatic Corps,

Chairpersons of Statutory Bodies,

Director Generals of International and National Research Organizations present,

Members of the Private Sector,

Members of Civil Society Organizations,

Distinguished Participants,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Good morning!

It is my pleasure to join my colleague Hon. Vincent Ssempijja Bamulangaki, Minister of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries and all the Ugandans here in welcoming you to the Republic of Uganda, the Pearl of Africa.

I also want to extend my appreciation to the Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR), the International Maize and wheat Improvement Center (CIMMYT) for working together with MAAIF and ASARECA to organize this Summit.

The theme for this Summit – **repositioning ASARECA for accelerated African agricultural transformation** is a very pertinent one for our region.

Eminent scientists and stakeholders of the agricultural sector

From 2008 to 2013 (the post food crisis period), the annual growth rate of agricultural exports grew by 6.6% annually as a result of higher prices for some commodities on the global market, significant improvements in infrastructure – especially transport and telecommunication and greater efforts at regional integration. This is no reason to clap however. Over the same period; imports of agricultural commodities grew five-fold. This is in part because population has more than doubled over the last 30 years, has become increasingly urban and diets are shifting to higher protein foods and greater consumption of imported cereals (wheat, rice, and maize) rather than of the local cereals, roots, and tubers. Indeed the region is a net importer of cereals with the proportion of cereals in total domestic food cereal supply ranging from 100% in Congo; Ethiopia (11.8); Kenya (39.9); Madagascar (8.7); Malawi (1.9); Mozambique (29.1); Rwanda (35.2); Uganda (9.1); and Tanzania (14.9%).

Distinguished guests,

Ladies and gentlemen,

This means the sector is not responding adequately to demographic and other trends, because average farm yields have largely stagnated, our agriculture is still rain-fed even when climate change effects dictate otherwise – indeed the percentage of arable land equipped for irrigation in the fourteen countries represented here is only 4.7%, mechanization is low, and so is fertilizer use. The time to do business unusual is overdue.

In 2014, African Leaders made commitments at the African Union Summit in Malabo, Equatorial Guinea to accelerate agriculture growth. Among other pledges include enhancing investment finance in the agriculture sector.

In fact, each dollar invested in agricultural research and development has been estimated to provide returns of up to \$10 or more to the overall economy. Investments in public agricultural research, development and extension programs are essential to enabling the science and innovation needed to accelerate growth in productivity. Overall public sector expenditure on agriculture in the region still lags behind the Maputo recommendation of at least 10% of the national budget. The average expenditure for EAC countries stands at only 4.4%; 3.3% for COMESA countries and 2.7% for SADC countries. As the Republic of Uganda, we have made commendable progress towards meeting this agriculture spending target so as to facilitate innovation and technology generation but we can do better.

National agricultural research systems are at the core of innovation for local and national food security. Innovations, technologies and practices developed through publicly-funded agricultural research help producers around the world remain competitive by increasing the productivity and sustainability of production, reducing loss and waste in the value chain and enabling adaptation to, and even mitigation of climate change. Consumers of agricultural products benefit from the lower, more stable prices and increased access to safe, nutritious food resulting from these investments.

But as the African Proverb goes - – “if you want to go quickly, go alone; but if you really want to go far, then go together”. Regional agricultural research institutions such as ASARECA play a role in catalyzing collective actions and economies of scale by allowing our sovereign governments to access and share proven technologies and innovations as well as scarce resources such as scientists and hi-tech laboratory infrastructure.

Invited guests,

Ladies and gentlemen,

25 years ago, ten countries in the eastern and central Africa region including Uganda, Burundi, Kenya, DRC, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Madagascar, Rwanda, Sudan and Tanzania entered a memorandum of understanding to collaborate in research for development. The Association for Strengthening Agricultural Research in Eastern and Central Africa (ASARECA) was birthed in response to a critical need to strengthen capacities for agricultural research for development and to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness with which research was responding to critical challenges in the agricultural sector.

At the heart of this pledge was a commitment to leave no country behind; at the time some countries were just coming out of conflict and needed to rebuild their national agricultural research systems and some, I am told did not even have a faculty of agriculture.

I am glad to say that the Government of Uganda entered into a Headquarters Agreement with ASARECA at its inception and has hosted it since. ASARECA enjoys diplomatic status in Uganda.

ASARECA embodies the fact that the national agricultural research systems of eastern and central Africa together are more potent than the sum of its parts. ASARECA provides the platform for countries to exploit their comparative advantages and relative strengths resulting in economies of scale and the critical mass needed to address common priority constraints. In particular, ASARECA coordinates the identification of the regional research priority agenda, fosters scientific and technical collaboration through collaborative regional research programs, building AR4D related capacities, exchange of germplasm and new knowledge. Some of our development challenges transcend borders, which are porous for that matter – and require collective responses as no country alone can carry the weight.

In the recent past, the member countries have called for reforms in ASARECA governance and management to ensure that the institution better fulfills its mandate. I have been made aware that this Summit will instate the new governance system for ASARECA in response to these demands.

I have been made to understand that the ASARECA Council of Patron Ministers responsible for agricultural research will now be more actively involved in providing overall guidance to regional collaborative programs, confer the legal authority by signing the revised constitution of ASARECA, and provide a political umbrella to the ASARECA Board of Directors. The Council assures the political support needed if ASARECA is to be truly representative of all the elements of the NARS in respective countries and that regional research as long as it serves our national priorities features prominently in the policy agenda to ensure adequate, stable and timely funding.

It is also essential that the Board of governance of ASARECA is inclusive, efficient, and effective and reflects the complexity of the agricultural sector and its R4D requirements. The Board of Directors ensures that the regional research agenda is seamlessly aligned or adds value to our national priorities.

The Republic of Uganda supports the governance and management reforms undertaken at ASARECA and wants a revitalized, reformed and effective ASARECA that is more efficient and effective in supporting member states achieve agricultural transformation. As a region we need to leapfrog into middle income countries by learning more and exchanging more with one another.

In support of the mandate of ASARECA as our principal organization for coordinating R4D efforts in the region, I take this opportunity to encourage the Republic of Uganda and other member countries to fulfill their funding commitments to ASARECA to enable it fulfill its mandate. Africa needs to support her home grown institutions by keeping our funding commitments so they can be strong enough to fulfill their mandate.

I also thank the developments partners represented here who are actively supporting regional research initiatives for the solidarity and support that they have extended to Uganda and the region at large through these initiatives. I do call for more South-South and triangular cooperation which is a valuable avenue for developing capacity although we can and should expand the scope to all areas of mutual interest in the context of R4D partnerships for development.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I now want to take this opportunity to condole with Malawi and Mozambique over the loss of lives occasioned by the recent flood events. Let us take a moment of silence in honour of those who passed on.

Climate change is indeed with us and must be addressed.

Although the agricultural sector contributes the least to climate change effects, it is unfortunately the worst hit. The agriculture sector hence has to be an active player in devising mechanisms for mitigating against climate change and ensuring the resilience of our farmers and ultimately our economies.

Later this morning this forum will discuss at some length the promise of conservation agriculture-based sustainable intensification for enhancing climate resilience and sustainability of our farming systems. These discussions will be based on an 8-year collaborative research effort (commonly called the SIMLESA Project - short for the Sustainable Intensification of Maize-

Legume Cropping Systems in Eastern and Southern Africa). It is gratifying to note that the SIMLESA project spearheaded transnational collaboration that involved NARO scientists and those from ASARECA, CIMMYT, the Australian Center for International Agricultural Research [ACIAR]- as the main funder –and their collaborators in seven countries across eastern and southern Africa and the University of Queensland.

This discussion will be opportune for us because Uganda's climate smart agriculture strategy recognizes the important role that conservation agriculture plays in addressing climate change. I encourage you therefore to critically review the issues and evidence presented and to embrace those policy actions that we need to roll out as a region to ensure that our food security is cushioned against climate change for us and for those that will come after us. Climate change remains a threat to our efforts to achieve sustainable development. We must muster the political will to fully implement our national climate change strategies – mitigation and adaptation measures. And as we listen in on the evidence provided in this forum, let us commit to

- being the generation that saves the planet
- ensuring that no country and no one is left behind in AR4D
- ensuring that ASARECA is revitalized to deliver its mandate and empowered financially to do so
- regional collaboration in AR4D based on national priorities and needs

It is now my pleasure to declare this Summit Open and to wish you all fruitful deliberations

FOR GOD AND MY COUNTRY

ALHAJ ALI KIRUNDA KIVEJINJA

RT. HON. SECOND DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER AND MINISTER OF EAST AFRICAN AFFAIRS

3RD MAY 2019

KAMPALA, UGANDA

**Association for Strengthening Agricultural Research in Eastern and
Central Africa (ASARECA)**

Plot 5, Mpigi Road | P. O. Box 765, Entebbe, Uganda

Tel: +256 414 320 556, +256 414 321 885

Email: asareca@asareca.org | Website: www.asareca.org

 [asareca@facebook.com](https://www.facebook.com/asareca)  [@asareca](https://twitter.com/asareca)