

**OPENING ADDRESS BY PERMANENT SECRETARY MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE, KENYA DURING THE SOUTHERN AND EASTERN AFRICA COTTON FORUM (SEACF) HELD AT OUTSPAN HOTEL, NYERI (27<sup>TH</sup> -29<sup>TH</sup> AUGUST, 2012)**

- **SEACF Chairperson –**
- **Dr. Rafiq Chaudry**, Representative International Cotton Advisory Committee (ICAC)
- **Dr. GJ Thomson** – Agricultural Research & Council South Africa
- **Dr. Ephraim Mukisira**, KARI Director,
- **Mr. Micah Powon**, CEO, Cotton Development Authority,
- **Dr. M. Akiri**, CABI Regional Director,
- International Guests: **Ethiopia, Mozambique, South Africa, Sudan, Uganda and Zambia**
- **Local Organizing Committee**

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

**Good morning:**

I first of all wish to welcome you all especially our visitors from outside Kenya. Kenyans are warm and friendly people. During your stay, enjoy the climate, sample our meals and get an opportunity to see the country side and the game.

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

I am delighted this morning to be part of this Southern and East Africa Cotton Forum. I wish to thank the organizers of this forum for having selected Kenya to host this 11<sup>th</sup> meeting of the forum. While thanking everyone for having spared time to attend and participate in this forum, I would wish to single out and thank the ICAC for the initiative and the pivotal role it played in establishing SEACF. I say this because, globally the trend everywhere is for organizations, Companies and other institutions coming together to synergize in whatever they do with a view of becoming more competitive in their specialties. Therefore it was only prudent for cotton scientists from Southern and Eastern Africa to constitute a forum whose object would be to interact to share views on research and development in

addition to promotion of adoption of appropriate agricultural knowledge, information and technologies on cotton.

For Kenya, this forum could not have come at a better time given that Kenya Government has committed itself to revamp its cotton industry due to the many forward and backward linkages that create many opportunities for employment and poverty reduction.

**Ladies and gentlemen,**

Public policy and National strategies play a key role in development of any commodity or sector. I therefore want to challenge you scientists who have been given the responsibility to shape opinions in cotton research and its development to be at the forefront in advising Government policy makers on global trends in view to required policy direction on cotton for the benefit of national development. Just as an example, although most COMESA countries developed their biosafety frameworks some years back (2001 – 2007) few to date have approved their national biosafety or biotechnology policy and passed biosafety law. In Kenya we have had long debates surrounding this topic both in the public arena and also at public policy development level but I believe input from scientists like yourselves would quickly give informed decisions on such matters expeditiously for the benefit of communities you represent.

**Ladies and gentlemen,**

As the theme of the Forum postulates “Focusing cotton Industry and Cotton Scientists in Africa”, I believe this meeting will offer an opportunity for the participants to identify and discuss what ails the African scientists that make us unable to adequately address local challenges that make our continent food insecure and net importer of food despite the enormous natural resource base not to mention being importers of textiles with exception of just a few if any. For there to be appreciable impact, Scientists and policy makers need to work closely together to address issues that relate to acquisition and transfer of agricultural research findings/technologies and knowledge sharing for the benefit of resource poor farmers in the developing world.

## **Ladies and Gentlemen**

My country has a Cotton Act, CAP 335 that was amended in 2006 to promote a bigger private sector involvement in the sub sector activities in the areas of production, marketing and processing. Therefore I would not be through with my address without noting the key role that the private sector is playing in the development of the sector. Currently a number of private companies have invested in bringing in new seed materials of cotton to complement our two (2) commercial varieties developed by the National Research Institute, (KARI). I am informed that already (2) new varieties are about to be released by the private seed companies which is encouraging. There are also new developments in the ginning and textile milling sector to support the industry.

## **Ladies and Gentlemen,**

The Government has embraced adoption of global trends in the sector. Facilities to support research and marketing of cotton are being supported and established like the Instrument based National cotton classification facility at National Agricultural Laboratories, Nairobi. However Government role is being confined to facilitative regulatory activities to promote transparency, fair-play and creation of an enabling environment for vibrant private sector participation. The government is promoting Public Private Partnerships to address identified bottlenecks for example clean certified seed supply with a view to improve returns at all levels of the value chain and to attract more investments in the sub sector.

## **Ladies and gentlemen,**

With those few remarks I wish to end my key note address and declare this forum open.

**Thank you for listening and God bless you.**