

**THE OPENING CEREMONY OF THE 7TH INTERNATIONAL POSTHARVEST  
SYMPOSIUM (IPS 2012)  
25/06/2012**

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Distinguished guests, fellow scientists, delegates, ladies and gentlemen,  
  
and a very good morning

1. I am very pleased and deeply honoured to be given the opportunity this morning to officiate the Opening of the Seventh International Postharvest Symposium 2012. I wish to thank the organizers, MARDI, Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM), and International Society for Horticultural Science (ISHS) for this privilege. I would also like to extend a very warm welcome and "Selamat Datang" to all our guests and participants, especially those from overseas.

2. I understand that this symposium, held every four years, is in the 7th edition and is hosted in Malaysia and Asia for the very first time. We feel very proud and privileged for this honor. We thank ISHS for selecting Malaysia as the host for this prestigious event.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

3. The horticulture industry is significantly important for the global population as it assumes the role of ensuring adequate and high quality supplies of food, create employments and provides economic value and development to communities and countries. The global trade in horticulture commodities that include fruits and vegetables had reached more than 1.5 million tonnes in 2009, commercially valued at more than USD1.03 billion.

4. The increasing acceptance of horticulture commodities by the world is soundly reflected by

the growth in its trade flow. Trade in horticulture commodities grew by more than 12% from 2003, to exceed USD 3.4 trillion in 2010. This fact represents that demand for these commodities is expected to significantly grow further in line with the increase in world population, changes in life styles and greater awareness on the nutritional values for health.

5. It is predicted that in the coming four decades the global agriculture sector will be facing greater challenges. Continued population growth will certainly increase demand for food, in particular, while climate change and natural resources degradation will affect production and quality.

6. The Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) estimates that global agriculture production will need to grow by 70 percent by 2050, and almost 100 percent in developing countries, to feed a population of more than 9 billion in 2050. Evidently, insufficient growth in agriculture production will lead to higher and more volatile prices. Thus, concerted and unilateral endeavours to rapidly enhance agriculture production must be continuously implemented.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

7. The Second APEC Ministerial Meeting on Food Security held in Kazan, Russian Federation on the 30-31 May 2012, stressed the importance of reducing postharvest losses along the whole food supply chain. The Kazan Declaration noted the importance of developing food supply chain and market infrastructure. The Declaration also highlighted advanced postharvest management and elaborating approaches to introduce modern supply chain as one of the measures to enhance food security.

8. I am glad the Kazan declaration has strongly emphasized on the importance of postharvest issues in addressing global food security. This declaration is in line with the Malaysian Agro-food Policy and Economic Transformation Programme (ETP) that aims to double agriculture contribution to gross national income by expanding the production of high value agriculture commodities. Through better infrastructure, crop production management technique and postharvest technology Malaysia has set a target to increase the productivity of agriculture commodities by 40% by the year 2020.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

9. The fresh horticultural crops industry is faced with tremendous growth and market demand, both for the local and export markets. Fresh fruits, vegetables and flowers are highly perishable and need to be properly handled to minimize losses. These losses occur all along the supply chain beginning from the time of harvesting until consumption.

10. The estimated postharvest losses of these crops in the developing countries are approximately 30-40%, about two to three times more than losses faced by the developed countries. Reducing the postharvest losses will definitely add a sizeable quantity to the global food supply. Currently, developing countries produced approximately 1.05 billion tonnes of fresh fruits and vegetables which constitute 78% of world horticulture production. A reduction of 10% in losses should significantly contribute an additional 105 million tonnes to the global markets. This will facilitate the efforts to mitigate the issues of food security, making food more available and affordable in developing countries.

11. Thus, the challenge is to continuously find cost-effective ways to reduce such wastage

and losses. One significant aspect would be greater investment and extensive research in improved post-harvest management and logistics will be an important component of a broader agriculture development strategy. Advancement in postharvest handling technology, such as extension of storage life, improvement in quality and safety, and efficient handling procedures are some examples of the technologies that have been further developed and enhanced to facilitate enhancing a conducive eco-system for horticulture industry.

12. With advancement in postharvest handling technology, contribution of horticulture crops to total export has increased. Malaysia, in particular, has experienced the benefit of constantly upgrading and improving methods and mechanisms for postharvest handling. For example in 2011, total exports of Malaysia's horticulture crops, comprising fresh fruits, vegetables and ornamentals was valued at USD418.6 million (RM1.3 billion), which marked a significant increase of 69.8% from year 2006, valued at USD246.6 million or RM764.5 million.

13. Consequently, improvement in postharvest handling technology especially on extension of storage life has allowed, and will certainly promote greater volume of fresh fruits, vegetables and ornamentals, to be exported to more distant countries as well as non-traditional markets.

14. ASEAN countries are among the biggest suppliers of tropical fresh fruits, vegetables and ornamentals to the world markets. The postharvest handling technologies have enabled these commodities to be exported to the other parts of the world, and created various economic and commercial opportunities. For examples, Malaysian starfruits have been exported to Europe, papayas to China, pineapples to Middle East, chrysanthemum flowers to Japan and durians to Australia. Malaysian fresh cut jackfruits and durians have even been exported to the Netherlands and Hong Kong in recent years. Hopefully one day, all of us will be able to enjoy Malaysian exotic fruits elsewhere in the world with the same freshness and quality.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

15. Innovation is the key for Malaysian agricultural transformation programme to make Malaysian agriculture more competitive. Malaysia must continue to seek new platform technologies, and knowledge that can effectively speed up this programme. The Malaysian government will generate more initiatives and provide relevant incentives for the development of postharvest technologies. Special allocations and R&D grants will be provided to support these initiatives. It is hoped with these initiatives and R&D grants, new technologies and knowledge will be developed to boost the agriculture sector production, thus contributing to the food supply for the nation, and the world.

16. Once again, I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the Organizers - MARDI, UPM, ISHS and other organizations for the commitment and dedication in putting together, logistically and substantively, an international event of this nature. I am sure that new knowledge in postharvest science and technology will be deliberated and shared in this symposium.

17. I wish all the speakers and participants a successful and fruitful deliberation. I hope you will also take time to visit and experience the scenic and interesting places Malaysia has to offer. I warmly wish you an enjoyable stay in Malaysia.

18. It is now my privilege and pleasure to officially declare open the 7th International

Postharvest Symposium 2012.

Thank you.

Assalamualaikum warahmatullahi wabarakatuh.