

SANREM CRSP Annual Meeting 2011

Welcome Remarks, S.K. De Datta

Good morning everyone.

I am S. K. De Datta, Associate Vice President for International Affairs and Director of OIRED at Virginia Tech. I serve as the Administrative PI for all the donor-funded projects managed by OIRED Virginia Tech, including SANREM CRSP. On behalf of the management entity at Virginia Tech, I welcome each one of you who have traveled from near and far including those who came from our collaborating host countries in Asia, Africa, and Latin America as well as other distant places. We would especially like to welcome Harry Rea, who is the SANREM CRSP AOTR representing USAID Washington. As you may know, Harry manages four CRSPs and has other leadership roles in the agency. Because SANREM CRSP is a cooperative agreement, we work with Harry very closely. This is by far the most important annual meeting for SANREM CRSP we are holding this year. Therefore, our ME, headed by SANREM CRSP interim program director Mike Kelly has structured this meeting differently than our earlier annual meetings. Our objectives in this annual meeting are to reinforce the idea that we are focusing our efforts around a thematic topic, i.e. conservation agriculture.

In the earlier phase, we had disparate topics but no central theme to bind them together in a coherent integrated project. Mike is going to elaborate on the objectives of this year's meeting following my remarks. It is imperative that CRSP projects as a family must contribute to USAID's priority program called "Feed the Future." Under this program, research investments are expected to focus on:

1. Advancing the productivity frontier,
2. Transforming production systems, and
3. Enhancing nutrition and food safety.

In the global context, it is a new approach to global hunger and food security. It is estimated that the number of people suffering from hunger and poverty exceeds one billion. Out of 20 priority countries USAID has selected under this program, SANREM

CRSP is working in eight countries. Five of these are in Africa, two in Asia and one in Latin America. We have about three and half years left from this round of SANREM CRSP. It is important that we have made progress in global hunger and food security with impactful results. SANREM CRSP has two major foci: sustainable agriculture and natural resources management.

With the first focus, we should be able to generate technologies which can demonstrate some definable impacts. The second one probably has to be with a slightly longer term perspective in view. We do not know if there will be another phase of SANREM CRSP after September 2014. I shall defer that issue to Harry to comment on. If there is one, then consortium members have to show impactful results which would certainly help our renewal application to be competitive.

This annual meeting is an excellent venue to address the SANREM CRSP project in its entirety, particularly what we have achieved and what we need to achieve by the end of this project cycle to position ourselves in a competitive arena. Although we had a strong base in the first phase, I am afraid it was not a coherent base from which to build the current phase except for perhaps one sub-project which has some continuation. USAID invested \$12 million in the first five years and has budgeted \$15 million in this phase for five years until 2014. With what's going on in the Congress with budget cuts, I am not sure if the CRSP budget will be protected. Again I will defer to Harry to comment on this in his remarks. This meeting is a unique opportunity to discuss thoroughly as a project in its entirety where we are now and where we need to be by September 30, 2014. We as the ME of the project are committed to its success in all areas of technology generation, and expect impactful results to contribute to ameliorating global hunger and food security.

With these brief remarks I wish to welcome all of you to this annual meeting at the Virginia Tech campus. I look forward to welcoming all of you to my residence this evening for a reception, fellowship and dinner and to meet a couple of university and college officials.

Thanks for your kind attention.