



**SPEECH OF THE HON. MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE, ANIMAL INDUSTRY
AND FISHERIES AT THE OPENING CEREMONY OF THE 4TH GENERAL
MEETING OF THE COALITION FOR AFRICAN RICE DEVELOPMENT (CARD),
MUNYONYO KAMPALA-UGANDA, 8TH NOVEMBER, 2011**

Your Excellency-The President of AGRA, Dr. Namanga Ngongi,
Your Excellency- Japanese Ambassador to Uganda, Mr. Kazuo Minagawa,
The Representative of His Excellency, the Vice President of JICA,
The Chief Representative of JICA Uganda, Mr. Tetsuo Seki,
Representatives of other Development Partners,
Representatives from the South–South Cooperation member countries,
Representatives of CARD member Countries in Sub-Saharan Africa,
Members of CARD Steering Committee,
Distinguished participants, Ladies and Gentlemen.

It is my pleasure to welcome you to the 4th General Meeting of The Coalition for African Rice Development (CARD). Uganda is honoured to host this important meeting. This meeting will address the vital challenges of formulating strategies to enhance food security and to improve household income in Africa.

Uganda is one of the countries in which the agricultural sector is still a key driver of the economy. Agriculture contributes about 23% of National GDP and employs about 73% of the population aged 10 years and above. Agriculture also facilitates the functioning of other sectors of the economy including the agro-processing and manufacturing industries. In light of the prevailing food crisis all over the world, Uganda has remained relatively food secure albeit a few pockets of inadequate food distribution mechanisms in the East and North East caused largely by lack of adequate storage and processing infrastructure.

Rice in Uganda is increasingly becoming a popular staple food as well as a cash crop. Previously, rice production technologies required wet ecologies, for which reason, rice growing in Uganda remained unpopular for over 60 years until 2002 when the NERICA upland rice was introduced. It is now possible to grow rice in almost every part of Uganda. On this note we appreciate Africa Rice Centre, the Rocker-Feller Foundation, JICA, FAO, SG2000 and other Development Partners for the initiative of disseminating NERICA Rice in the country.

On a commendable note, through such efforts rice production in Uganda increased from 120,000MT in 2002 to 200,000MT in 2010, saving Uganda over USDollars 50 million annually on rice importation. Net import however is still estimated at about 60,000MT. More work is required to achieve rice self sufficiency.

Rice production in Uganda is also not devoid of challenges that have spanned the entire agricultural sector. These include among others:

- Changing rainfall patterns against the backdrop of inadequate irrigation facilities,
- Declining soil fertility amidst a low fertilizer use regime,
- Pests and diseases and unaffordable agro-chemicals;

- Poor post harvest handling and processing thus, low grain quality,
- Inefficient marketing infrastructure,
- Inadequate advisory and extension services.

In recognition of the above sector challenges, the Government of Uganda, through the Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries formulated the **Agriculture Sector Development Strategy and Investment Plan (DSIP, 2010/11-2014/15)**. The DSIP has identified and prioritized key interventions and enterprises to improve household food and nutrition security. The Overall objective is Agriculture for food and income targeting improved livelihoods. Rice is one of the priority enterprises.

The Government of Uganda in partnership with rice stakeholders and with support from CARD Secretariat in Nairobi, developed the **National Rice Development Strategy (NRDS, 2008-2018)**, to guide the Rice Industry in the country. The goal of the NRDS is to increase quality rice production and help to achieve the country's target of rice self sufficiency by 2018.

Implementation of the NRDS in Uganda started in 2010 with prioritization and phasing of key interventions therein. Areas of focus for key interventions were developed. These include:

- ✓ Rice data collection and management
- ✓ Seed production and multiplication,
- ✓ Tools and machinery,
- ✓ Irrigation and water management,

- ✓ Soil fertility through a fertilizer facility,
- ✓ Processing and Value Addition, and,
- ✓ Knowledge generation and dissemination.

It is our hope that full implementation of these interventions can result in achieving the set rice production targets.

Government of Uganda is committed to implementing the NRDS. We appreciate the additional support and commitment from Development Partners especially JICA, SG2000, Brac-Uganda, Africa Rice Centre and Islamic Development Bank among others in implementing the NRDS. No doubt, further support is required to implement all the prioritized interventions.

I wish to appeal to all rice stakeholders to marshal concerted effort towards achieving Uganda's NRDS target of increasing rice production from approximately 200,000MT currently to 450,000 MT by 2018.

The NRDS implementation challenges are not unique to Uganda. Distinguished participants, allow me therefore to make the same appeal to the Governments of CARD member countries here present, as well as Development Partners to support full scale implementation their respective country NRDS.

Once again, I am happy to welcome all of you to Uganda - **the Pearl of Africa**. Please enjoy your stay in Uganda and endeavor to have a taste of all the Ugandan dishes especially the rice grown here.

I wish you fruitful deliberations in this meeting **and now declare the meeting officially opened.**

For God and My Country.

Tress N. Buchanayande (MP)

Minister of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries (MAAIF)

The Republic of Uganda

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