



The ED's Opening Remarks:

15 Years of FARA: Science as an Engine of Agricultural Transformation



Johannesburg, 26th November, 2014

Courtesies

Excellencies,

Distinguished colleagues and friends,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a singular honour for me to bid you all a warm welcome to the special Celebrating FARA event marking the quinquennial anniversary of FARA.

This week is dedicated to 'Celebrating FARA', a moment in the history of the organization that enables the Secretariat and entire Forum to reflect on its past achievements and the type of future it wants for Africa. The theme chosen for the celebrations – *Delivering Africa's Future Through Science-led Agricultural Transformation* reflects the wisdom surrounding the need for a mature FARA to **renew, reposition and refocus** the efforts of the Forum particularly, in the context of the new Strategic plan and the Science Agenda for Agriculture in Africa.

'Celebrating FARA' is intended to achieve the following objectives:

- Appraise FARA's achievements and chart its future strategic focus.
- Enhance the visibility of FARA and strengthen its partnerships with stakeholders.
- Unveil the new corporate image of a rebranded FARA by rolling out a new FARA logo, and website.
- Launch the Science Agenda for Agriculture in Africa.
- Launch a book and video documentary on *FARA: Shaping Africa's Future through Agricultural Research for Development*
- Organize a FARA-CGIAR-led Agricultural Technology Fair and a series of side events to showcase Africa's agricultural science, technologies and innovations.

Indeed it is a great home coming event for us as a Forum. Only 7 years ago, we had our GA here and we are delighted to be back to Johannesburg – The City of Gold in our second sabbatical Year

Therefore, FARA is happy to welcome you all back to Jo'burg as it is popularly known. The week-long event is specially packaged for you to include AFAAS Board meeting, RUFORUM Strategic Business meeting, UniBRAIN Steering Committee and the Agribusiness Incubation Sensitization meeting, SSA CP Colloquium, PSTAD Implementation Completion Review and Learning Workshop, Climate-Smart Agriculture meeting, AFAPP Agricultural Productivity and Advocacy Dialogue, FARA Investment Strategy Dialogue, CORAF/WECARD agricultural research partnership workshop, CCARDESA promoting innovative agricultural technology generation and dissemination workshop, LABIOFAMS exhibitions; FARA-CGIAR Science Agenda for Agriculture in Africa; FARA-CGIAR open space agricultural fair, NPCA

Agricultural Education and Skills Improvement Framework validation meeting; launch of the FARA logo, strategy, S3A, AAST, JAAAST, Quarterly newsletter, et cetera. More information about these is available in the brochure.

Back in 1999, which was the pre-CAADP era, agricultural research and development in Africa recorded a poor performance and an abysmally low annual investment in agriculture. In establishing FARA, Africans recognized that it was necessary to redress this anomaly. Since then, working with our donors, SROs, pan-African organisations, member countries and our constituents, we at FARA have strived to build an agricultural economy that serves the interests of Africa. We have served as a forum to ensuring that Africa's future can be delivered through Science-led agricultural transformation.

Having demonstrated a remarkable capacity to deliver results since its inception, FARA is poised to continue to play an even more visible and significant role in implementing Africa's transformation agenda, in collaboration with the African Union Commission (AUC) and the NEPAD Planning and Coordinating Agency (NPCA). In this context, FARA is currently embarking on a strategic shift into the next phase of its institutional evolution, thereby informing its on-going rebranding and repositioning efforts. By implication, FARA is responding to the continental Agriculture-led economic growth through the catalysis of the transformational and translational change in the agricultural sector and strengthening its relevance by **(1) Renewing, (2) Repositioning and (3) Refocusing**

Excellences, Ladies and Gentlemen

I would like to make specific mention of the significance of our gathering here this week.

It is our own way of commemorating the AU-Year of African Agriculture and Food Security and the UN commemoration of the year of Family Farming. In this context, we are delighted to have HE Commissioner Tumusiime from the African Union with us today. This Forum is our modest contribution of marking the year 2014.

Secondly, it affords us all the opportunity to build new bridges and to fix the 'holes-in-in the roof'. In my country, we always say, that you can't place a meaningful luggage on your head with only one hand. Celebrate FARA is placing phenomenal opportunities at your disposal this week and beyond to build those bridges North South, East west,

Demonstrating the power of science supporting agriculture as a development agent is at the heart of Celebrating FARA. FARA has been a game changer for 15 years and has changed the landscape of African agricultural development to reach our goal where Africa will be the majority supplier for food security across the globe. Our current shifts and policies must be seen to be aligned to this. Because science is a catalyst for change, FARA's transformative agenda impacts on economic transformation and inclusive growth to create a shift from Africa being an importer of food to becoming an exporter. This is the reason for conferences such this one

The whole essence is that our Forum – You is the workhorse that will power the science, the technology and the innovation that Africa requires to achieve the economic transformation. If we lost yesterday, let us make today count.

I will like to express our appreciation to our various stakeholders, constituents, partners and donors who have supported FARA since its inception. As we look into the future, we are positive that FARA will continue to promote agricultural research and development in order to enhance the productivity and competitiveness of Africa's agriculture.

Finally, as I tweeted recently, FARA is moulting! Be a part of this transformation that will bring Science to bear on our economic stay. If our generation succeeds in doing that, we would have left a great legacy behind. Indian Statesman Jawaharal Neru once said Everything else can wait, Agriculture cannot. That's why they caught the Green revolution train and they made it count.

In Africa, Agriculture has waited too long and this is a situation that an event like Celebrating FARA is set to change.

Finally, let me invite you to follow us on our social space. I have learnt to tweet and re-tweet, to facebook and face time and to linked in as well as WhatsApp in the last few weeks. I invite you to join our train. Pick up the handles and use the hashtags

To all our stakeholders, constituents, partners and donors, we wish you a warm welcome to the Celebration of FARA. Welcome to Your Celebration

Thank you

Dr. Yemi Akinbamijo, Executive Director, FARA