

## FOREWORD

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Barely a quarter of a century ago, Africa was self-sufficient in food staples, and it was almost inconceivable that Africa would become the centre of global concern about its food and nutritional security in the 1980's.

The declining economies of Africa in the mid-1970's; the cataclysmic drought during the period 1982–1985; followed by the just-ended devastating locust plague which started in 1986; and the overwhelming debt crisis that has burdened African economies this decade; have all conspired to paint a totally different picture of Africa's agricultural performance, since agriculture remains the predominant source of economic activity in Africa.

The issues confronting Africa are that Africa can indeed feed itself, and that it could even regain its capacity to become a significant food exporter; that agriculture continues to be a major, if not the dominant, sector of the economic life of most African countries for the next quarter century; and that the primary responsibility for food and nutritional security remains with the African governments. However, Africa faces a three-pronged challenge to the vital position that agriculture had held before independence, as an exporter of food and raw materials. First, African countries have become the fastest growing source of demand for North American and Australian agricultural exports, especially food grains, over the last two decades. Second, South and Southeast Asia are vigorously growing as competitors to Africa in food exports, including maize, cassava and palm oil. And, third, the European Economic Community is becoming an increasingly restricted destination for Africa's traditional agricultural exports.

These issues and challenges require that Africa begin to design new solutions to regain its

agricultural competitiveness. A beginning needs to be made by examining and restructuring our farmer-scientist-extension specialist-policy-maker relationship. This step can be greatly assisted by our deeper understanding that the African farmer's traditional knowledge base in agricultural practice—including facets of pest management—is based on continual experimentation and experience gained over millennia, and stretching over diverse ecologies and circumstances. There can be no end-point to the farmer's experimentation and gathering of experience; it should become apparent that it is not only the scientist who undertakes experimentation, nor is he the only one who can relate to experience. Consequently, in terms of developing efficacious agricultural practices, appropriate to a particular agro-ecology and cultural experience, the scientist, the extension specialist and the farmer should be partners, both working on a common research agenda and a common programme of technology development and implementation.

During the recently concluded conference held on 22–26 May 1989 on "Pest Management and the African Farmer", at the Duduville headquarters of the ICIPE in Nairobi, Kenya, we witnessed the initiation of an interactive dialogue between the farmer, the extension specialist, the policy-maker, and the scientist. Realization of the enormous potential of African agriculture depends on a productive outcome of such a dialogue, which should be going on all over Africa on a sustained basis. We have chosen to open this dialogue on the theme of Integrated Pest Management since (a) it is critical to all tropical agriculture, and (b) we are on the threshold of some major breakthroughs in this difficult field. We hope that other expert groups will initiate similar dialogues in other problem-areas of African agriculture.

The participants in the conference were farmers, extension service personnel and agricultural researchers from all over Africa, but also included representatives from donor agencies and the agrochemical industry. For the first time in Africa, farmers' interests dominated in a discussion on pest management.

The objectives of the Conference were as follows:

- (1) To review pest management practices in various African countries and identify examples of successful approaches and promising opportunities for supporting implementation among farmers,
- (2) To examine socio-economic, institutional and policy constraints which impede improved integrated pest management (IPM) practices among farmers, and develop recommendations for overcoming them, and
- (3) To examine opportunities for increasing private sector involvement in the development and implementation of IPM among farmers in Africa.

Four distinct themes were discussed in depth:

- (1) Pests as a constraint in crop and livestock production.

- (2) Extension systems as mechanisms for technology transfer.
- (3) The role of IPM specialists and social scientists in generating technologies for the farming community in Africa, and
- (4) International co-operation and IPM in Africa.

All presented papers—or summaries of these—have already been published (in book form) as the *Proceedings of the Conference: Pest Management and the African Farmer* (Edited by Ole Zethner), ICIPE Science Press, Nairobi, Kenya, 155 pp, 1989. Copies may be obtained from ICIPE Science Press, P.O. Box 72913, Nairobi, Kenya. Of the 26 presented papers, seven were selected for publication in *Insect Science and its Application*, and only summaries of these appear in the *Proceedings*. The seven papers represent the themes discussed during the Conference, and highlight some of the major findings and obstacles, crucial for any improvement of African farmers' integrated pest management approach.

We wish you thoughtful reading!

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