

WELCOME ADDRESS

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It is great honour and a matter of immense pleasure for me to welcome the distinguished chief guest of this conference, His Excellency, Chaudhary Muhammad Iqbal, Minister for Food, Government of Punjab, the eminent research scientists, educationists, progressive citrus growers, and enthusiastic citrus industry personnels including processors, exporters and promoters (EPB, SMEDA). I would like to welcome and pay my gratitude to our guests and foreign delegates in this conference. I hope the conference will be benefitting for the participants as it provides a forum for discussion and sharing knowledge and expertise on various aspects of citriculture, from national and international perspectives.

It is the second International conference on citriculture in Pakistan. The first one was held during 1992 at the same place. This time the conference is being jointly organised by the University of Agriculture and Ayub Agricultural Research Institute Faisalabad, under the sponsorship of The Horticultural Foundation of Pakistan.

May I inform the participants of this conference that the University of Agriculture, Faisalabad is the foundation for agricultural academics and research activities in the subcontinent. It has played enormous role in the development of agricultural economy of the country by producing manpower, who then established new national agricultural research and academic institutions including Ayub Agriculture Research Institute, University of Arid Agriculture, National Agriculture Research Council etc in Pakistan and Agriculture University Ludhiana in India. The present to our citrus industry started from this University, where kinnow was first introduced and acclimated in the experimental orchard Square No. 9 of the former Agriculture College, Lyallpur. University has taken further steps to strengthen international and national collaboration and to establish cross institutional supervision for maximising the benefits from available human and other research resources to achieve the national goals in agricultural and Horticultural sector. I hope this university in collaboration with Punjab agriculture department will continue to play the leading role in the development of agricultural sector of Pakistan.

Coming toward the topic of today, Citrus is a blessing from Almighty Allah (SWT), for this country and Kinnow is our identity and pride for its high quality characteristics. Presently Pakistan is exporting 121,692 tonnes of Kinnow worth over US\$ 20 million. However, our exports are insignificant, when compared to other citrus producing countries due to many reasons including the lack of infrastructure, proper postharvest technology and training, and an integrated promotional and marketing efforts in overseas markets. Due to unstable local and export markets kinnow orchard management remained unstable and thus uprooting, replanting and intercropping are frequent. However, with the evidence of better future prospects, citrus replanting is again at rise in Sargodha and the industry is taking new turns at this point after going through decades of misfortunes. Establishment of Horticultural Export and Development Board, and

Citrus Research Institute are the first steps forward. Alongwith these encouraging waves, some of the problems are to be tackled right now. There is fast growth of unregulated citrus nurseries, which use unhealthy plant material and faulty propagation techniques and has resulted in low productivity and decline of the citrus orchards in the past, and will be a threat for the future too. Our industry has to prepare for the future challenges of WTO by 2005 and we have to prepare for the food safety and quality standards in the very competitive export markets. We need to devise and introduce postharvest management system for citrus, throughout fruit handling chain to reduce fruit losses. Currently we do not have any dedicated centre throughout country, for conducting research and developmental works on postharvest, and to prepare technical guidelines for training industry personnels to meet the current and future requirements. I propose to this forum to establish a dedicated “Centre for Postharvest Technology” at this university, which will cater for the needs of the industry to achieve national goals. Such are the challenges to be addressed in this conference. I hope the researchers and the stakeholders will discuss these issues and the conference will conclude with recommendations to serve as future guidelines for the policy makers to improve citrus industry in Pakistan.

I would like to conclude my address with cordial thanks to chief guest, His Excellency, Chaudhary Muhammad Iqbal, Minister for Food, Government of Punjab and the participants of the conference, International delegates, research scientists, students, organizers and sponsors of the conference, for their time and efforts in making this conference fruitful. I hope you will have good time here and will benefit from the proceedings of the conference.

Thank you.