

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Mr. Sikandar Hayat Bosan
Minister for Food, Agriculture and Livestock

Honorable guests, eminent scientists, prominent growers and participants to the conference; it is my pleasure and privilege to be among you on this auspicious event of First International Conference on Mango and Date Palm: Culture and Export. Agriculture is a highly diversified and well spread industry. It occupies approximately 11 percent of the world land area. The economy of Pakistan is based on agriculture with 87 percent foreign exchange earned from its raw materials and allied exports. The development of the country is, therefore, tied with the development of agriculture. The latter depends on the natural endowments of the area and judicious resource managements.

Agriculture has progressively become a complex industry from a simple planting-harvesting proposition a century ago. Today, every art and industry has links with agriculture supporting or supported by it. Modern agriculture differs from the primitive in many ways. The two can be characterized from their economic nature; commercial and subsistence, respectively. Agriculture today is market oriented and the journey from subsistence to commercial level was traversed with several changes.

In the underdeveloped countries, the agriculture lacks appropriate inputs use. The yields are low and the population growth rate has lead to exploitive agriculture. High cropping intensity due to continuous crop production is increasingly reducing fallow periods. Input use and management are both improper. Degradation of soil, desertification, depleted forests and range lands and loss of biological diversity are the challenges faced by these countries, as a result. I realize under such a challenging situation; we as a nation need a thorough revision in the cultivation system; Drastic changes in the cropping pattern and corporate farming becoming imperative to increase the yield per acre; Horticultural crops are undoubtedly best choice in terms of their returns per acre. However, the orchards are of small to medium size and it involves small to medium enterprise development. The priority of our government is to boost the small and medium enterprise in agriculture having a major emphasize on export of agriculture especially horticultural fresh and value added commodities.

Whereby, we intend to increase dimensions in marketing from an internal to an external field. This is not to say that we were not selling our fresh fruits and value added commodities to other parts of the world. The channel which is effective at the moment, consists of airport, air luggage carriers and system organized that is not only time consuming but wasteful as well. I am not mentioning the loss of capability that has come about in the market as a result of these channels.

Exporting fresh produce is serious business, serious in the sense that it needs technical knowledge and skills, and it puts a nation's credibility to International forums. We all have to maintain that credibility and we all have to ensure systems whereby we can take our commodities to other parts of the world. This has to be beneficial to us, to our farmers, to the intermediaries who are looking for a better option, in terms of demand, for our farmers.

Honorable participants in this conference, leading mango and date growers and other stake holders in this industry from all Provinces of Pakistan, have been here for the past two days to discuss the issues and challenges to these industries. Wherever they may have participated in this conference and inculcated full benefits and knowledge from the conference in terms of a system's approach. The organizers have made an effort that would be termed as the beginning of metamorphic change in our country right from the farmer to the exporter. By the marketing of mangoes, dates and citrus we have to market the name of Pakistan. All we have to do is to market the best fruits to international market and to earn good name for this country. In that sense it is a very big challenge. So to all of you, may I suggest, that you benefit from this conference, share

the idea, discuss the issues with a perceptive mind to improve the obsolete system of cultivation, postharvest handling, processing and marketing.

Less land holding and small size of orchards under the potential threat of intensive cultivation alongwith interculture in the orchards and management practices are the key factors for low yield; which is stagnant over a decade has been thrashed in the conference.

Tenancy of orchards and lack of plant protection measures in orchards are discussed in length and breadth with corrective measures. So it should be taken seriously to improve the health; quality, longevity of the plant and yield potential.

Processing industry should come forward to help the farmers as such to consume the surplus commodity and export the value added commodity to earn a foreign exchange.

Zari Tarqiati Bank Ltd. (ZTBL) has been advised by our government to extend the loans to the small farmers for fostering their needs.

I am thankful to the faculty members and researchers from University of Agriculture, Faisalabad; Agriculture Research and Extension Departments, Foreign delegates and expatriates who came and helped us in our efforts for streamlining our mango and date industry. To all such individuals who helped convert this idea to an action forum, are hereby appreciated more than verbal expression.

I am sure that the delegates in these three days of intensive conference have learned a lot and will take away some important aspects of new thoughts. It is my great desire, the desire of everybody over here, and delegates not only appreciate the knowledge and ideas shared during the various sessions of three days rigorous conference but to materialized all the aspects.

With such a large and fine program of papers presented by eminent scientists to such a relatively large and interested audience, I feel confident that the objectives of conference have been amply met.

Let us foster these values, which are the basis of agriculture and let us help all farmers striving to earn the better livelihood.

I wish everybody creative work, new ideas and lasting impressions!

Thank you very much.