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18 September 2012 | Vienna, Austria

[15th Scientific Forum During 56th Session of IAEA General Conference](#)

Food for the Future: Meeting the Challenges With Nuclear Applications

by IAEA Director General Yukiya Amano

Thank you, Naga.

Distinguished Ministers, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am very pleased to welcome you to the *2012 IAEA Scientific Forum*. I especially thank Secretary Chu, Minister Margaret Kamar, Minister Nguyen Quan and Director General Haryana for agreeing to participate in this opening session.

I thank Mr. Jose Graziano da Silva, Director General of the FAO, for his video message.

I also welcome the many scientists and technologists who have come to share their expertise with us.

When I am asked why I decided to focus on food at this year's *Scientific Forum*, my answer is simple: there are nearly one billion people on this planet who do not have enough to eat. All of us have a responsibility to do everything we can to help them.

The IAEA is in the unique position of being able to make nuclear technology available to developing countries. We help them to grow more food, fight animal and plant pests and diseases, and ensure the safety of food products.

Nuclear technology makes a powerful and critical contribution. Working closely with our partners at the UN Food and Agriculture Organization, the IAEA supports over 200 projects in more than 100 countries. You saw some examples in the film a moment ago.

I hope that this *IAEA Scientific Forum* will encourage countries already familiar with nuclear techniques related to food to make more use of them. And I hope more countries will take advantage of the Agency's services in this area.

Ladies and Gentlemen, I would like to follow up on some of the examples of our work which you saw in the film.

[HOLD UP MANDARIN]

This mandarin comes from a region of Croatia where 90 percent of the people are involved in the citrus fruit industry. The value of citrus production in this area is estimated at around 30 million euros a year.

However, around a third of the annual crop is destroyed by fruit flies. We therefore deployed the Sterile Insect Technique. It is essentially a form of birth control. Millions of male flies are sterilised using gamma rays. They are released into the wild, where they mate with females. Because the males are sterile, there is no reproduction.

The result has been a drop of no less than 75 percent in fruit fly damage in the region concerned. Farmers are able to significantly reduce their use of insecticide, so there are also environmental benefits.

This mandarin is free of fruit flies.

[HOLD UP MACHINE]

This device is part of an easy-to-use, portable laboratory. It is making a huge difference in controlling animal diseases such as foot-and-mouth in more than 30 countries in Africa and Asia. It was co-developed by the IAEA using isotopic and nuclear-related techniques.

With this device, vets can carry out diagnostic tests on animals in remote areas. The results are known within an hour. Each test costs less than two US dollars. Vets can give immediate advice to farmers, inform the authorities if necessary and help prevent the spread of disease to neighbouring farms and other countries.

[HOLD UP BARLEY]

Finally, this is a variety of barley known as Centenario. It was developed using a plant-breeding technique that involves irradiation. It grows at altitudes of around 4 000 metres in the High Andes and is now Peru's leading barley variety.

Centenario has more protein than other types of barley. It is tasty and resistant to frost. More importantly, it has a higher yield than other barley types and fetches twice the price at market. It is not only improving the diets of remote communities in the High Andes, it is also increasing their incomes.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Clearly, the IAEA cannot solve the world's food problems on its own. But we can make an important contribution.

I am proud of the way in which the IAEA is able to put sophisticated scientific techniques to use and make them available in robust, practical ways in the field. This improves the lives of many thousands of people.

Over the next two days, you will hear from the people who helped to develop these products and from experts with first-hand experience of the nuclear techniques I have described.

This side of the Agency's work does not get the same public attention as our activities in nuclear safeguards, nuclear

safety and nuclear security. But it is just as important.

I hope you will have an interesting and productive meeting. I look forward to learning about the outcome of your discussions tomorrow.

Thank you.

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