OPENING REMARKS

Amson Sibanda
Chief, National Strategies and Capacity Building Branch
Division for Sustainable Development Goals, UNDESA

NATIONAL CAPACITY BUILDING WORKSHOP ON

"APPLICATIONS OF JUNCAO TECHNOLOGY AND ITS CONTRIBUTION TO THE ACHIEVEMENT OF SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE AND THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS IN ZIMBABWE"

2 November 2021

Harare ▪ Zimbabwe

Dr. Dumisani Kutywayo, Chief Director, Department of Research and Specialist Services
Dr. Patrice Tall, FAO Subregional Coordinator for Southern Africa and Representative for Zimbabwe
Mr. ZOU Xiaoming, Economic and Commercial Counselor, Embassy of PR. China in Zimbabwe
Distinguished Participants from Zimbabwe, and China,
Prof. LIN Zhanxi, Fujian Agriculture and Forestry University
Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, I am pleased to welcome all of you to this workshop on the "Applications of Juncao Technology and its Contribution to the Achievement of Sustainable Agriculture and the Sustainable Development Goals in Zimbabwe".

I would like to take this opportunity to reiterate to you our appreciation for your dedication and commitment reflected in your hard work that will help Zimbabwe achieve its national development aspirations, including a sustainable agriculture future.

In May 2021, UNDESA received a project proposal from the Ministry of Lands, Agriculture, Fisheries, Water and Rural Resettlement through the Permanent Mission of Zimbabwe to the United Nations. The Government of Zimbabwe has expressed interest in joining a DESA led project titled "Enhancing capacity of developing countries to achieve sustainable agriculture through the transfer of Juncao technology for alleviating poverty and promoting productive employment." Thus, Zimbabwe is included in the second phase of the Juncao project that runs from July 2021 to June 2024.

I am pleased to join you today and look forward to an exciting and informative workshop that we have been preparing for over the last couple months. Thanks to technology for allowing us to communicate unimpeded across time and space.

It is also a great pleasure to have the inventor of the Juncao technology, Professor Lin Zhanxi join us today. His invention is helping improve people's lives in more than 106 countries across the

world. I have heard so much about Juncao, and I am excited to hear from you, Dr. Dongmei LIN, and other Juncao experts from FAFU in the next 3 days.

I also look forward to hearing from the other speakers as your perspectives are crucial to ensuring that Zimbabwe can make maximum use of this technology.

Dear Participants,

Small-scale farmers in developing countries, including Zimbabwe, encounter constant challenges with respect to growing agricultural crops, putting them at risk of not being able to obtain enough harvests to ensure food security and nutrition or to generate sufficient income to support their families' livelihoods.

I grew up in Zimbabwe and pursued graduate studies in demography. My motivation to study demography was partly driven by the desire to understand the relationship between population dynamics and development issues, including the impact of population growth on food security and the environment.

And this is what we know today.

According to recent World Bank estimates, the global extreme poverty rose in 2020 for the first time in over 20 years as the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic pushed an additional 115 million people into extreme poverty.

Further, recent FAO estimates also indicate that between 83 and 132 million additional people, including 38 to 80 million people in low-income countries that rely on food imports, experienced food insecurity as a direct result of the pandemic.

The United Nations also projects that the world's population would grow from 7.7 billion in 2019 to reach 8.5 billion in 2030 and 9.7 billion in 2050. A big proportion of this increase will largely come from developing countries.

We also know that urbanization will continue at an accelerated pace, with the population living in urban areas making up 70 per cent of the world's population in 2050 compared to 49 per cent today. Income levels and the size of the middle class will also continue to increase, developments that will result in changes not only to consumption patterns, but in increased food demand.

To accommodate these megatrends, the Food and Agriculture Organization estimates that the world will need to produce as much as 70 per cent more food by 2050.

Because of these mega trends, Member States continue to deliberate how they can, in partnership with the private sector, civil society organization, and academia and other stakeholders, design and implement policies and strategies covering the three pillars of sustainable development - social, economic and environmental – that can improve the livelihoods of people, in particular the poor and people living in vulnerable situations.

What makes me excited is the hope that is offered by advances in science and technology such as the Juncao technology that is making a difference where it matters the most: at the local and community level, to the lives of smallholder and family farmers, women and youth and those most at risk of being left behind.

We at the UN see Prof. Lin and the Juncao technology as an example of academic excellence and a real game-changer on the ground as it hold potential to contribute to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals. Here in Zimbabwe, the Juncao technology has the potential to contribute to the National Development Strategy 1.

Sustainable Development Goal 17 seeks to revitalize global partnerships to support sustainable development through funding, capacity-building, peer learning and knowledge sharing, debt sustainability, trade facilitation, effective public–private partnerships and access to technologies. It involves the means of implementation, without which none of the other Sustainable Development Goals and the African Union Agenda 2063 goals could be realized.

It implies a diverse range of multisectoral stakeholder partnerships, a common shared vision among countries and communities, effective public and private sectors, civil society organizations and public sector partnerships, policy coherence, and a strong commitment to providing innovative means to make that vision a reality.

National dialogues are taking place around the world to encourage new partnerships and share knowledge about promising initiatives and technologies such as the Juncao technology. Today, there is a global audience eager to learn more about technologies that can be applied in food systems to generate synergies – ending poverty and hunger, supporting climate action and gender equality, and protecting ecosystems.

Hence, in 2017, the Juncao Project was established under the United Nations Peace and Development Trust Fund, for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, with generous support from the People's Republic of China. As of this year, our events have received participants from Albania, Cambodia, Democratic Republic of Congo, Central African Republic, Cook Islands, Eritrea, Fiji, Ghana, Laos, Lesotho, Madagascar, Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria, Nepal, Rwanda, Papua New Guinea, and Tonga, and many others.

Distinguished participants,

The Juncao technology is often referred to as "magic grass" because of several reasons.

The technology brings multiple benefits to SDG implementation at large. From China's Qinghai-Tibet Plateau, the Yellow River Basin, to the upstream riverbanks of the Nile River and the South African Plateau, the Juncao grass has been used to combat land degradation and desertification, conserve water, and restore and maintain soil fertility.

In the process, Juncao grass has been used for mushroom production, animal feed, and biomass fuel, contributing to progress in achieving various SDGs, particularly the eradication of poverty and hunger, the empowerment of women, environmental protection and sustainable energy.

By supporting mushroom cultivation, which is where Zimbabwe's interests lie, this technology is boosting food security and nutrition and the transition to a green economy through environmentally friendly technology, more sustainable agriculture, and green jobs for women and youth.

For instance, in Rwanda, a young mushroom producer, after receiving training at the Fujian Agriculture and Forestry University (FAFU), set up an agricultural company in Rwanda, which

can produce 10,000-20,000 mushroom substrate packs with a net income of US$3,000-US$5,000 per month.

Thus, the spark lit in Fujian Agriculture and Forestry University has shown the potential of a single innovation – if nurtured and deployed wisely – to change lives and improve livelihoods in Zimbabwe.

This capacity building workshop aims to enhance knowledge and strengthen national capacities to support sustainable agriculture through the transfer of Juncao technology to eradicate poverty, and promote productive activities, income generation and entrepreneurship along the agricultural value chain and to effectively contribute to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

It also provides us with an excellent opportunity to share ideas and knowledge, and I truly expect that we will all benefit greatly from these exchanges. This workshop marks the start of a new journey, I encourage you all to stay engaged, exchange experiences and lessons learned, and support sustainable agriculture in Zimbabwe, and the implementation of the National Development Strategy 1 (2021-2025).

I trust that that you will find this workshop interesting and fruitful, and we wish you all success.

Thank you.

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