

**KEYNOTE ADDRESS  
BY DIRECTOR-GENERAL  
OF THE ISLAMIC ORGANIZATION FOR FOOD SECURITY (IOFS)  
AT THE INAUGURAL MEETING OF CENTRES OF EXCELLENCE  
OF SECOND ASIAN GROUP OF CENTERS OF EXCELLENCE FOR RICE**

**NUR-SULTAN, KAZAKHSTAN, 21 OCTOBER 2020**

*Bismillahir Rahmanir Rahim*

Your Excellency, the Ambassador Askar Mussinov, Assistant Secretary General for Science and Technology of OIC;  
Distinguished Participants and esteemed invited observers Islamic Development Bank (**IDB**) and International Center for Biosaline Agriculture (**ICBA**)

*Assalam alaekum warahmatullahi wabarakatuhu*

Let me express our sincere appreciation to H.E. Ambassador Askar Mussinov, Assistant Secretary-General for Science and Technology of OIC, and our partners for the support and involvement in IOFS activities.

According to the resolutions of the OIC and the IOFS strategy, Rice is one of the strategic commodities for development in OIC, that is consumed by more than half of the world's inhabitants. It is one of the major staple crops grown across majority (43) of OIC member countries, which accounted for 23% of world total rice production and 26% of world total area harvested. In the world context, Asia accounts for more than 90 percent of the world's rice production and consumption.

Rice farming, from research to consumer delivery is experiencing challenge throughout the value chain. Despite challenges, there are a number of opportunities to enhance the role of the rice sector in improving food security.

The IOFS proposes a 5-year Action Plan for Rice Development to the Member States that creates regional networks for technology exchange and marketing instruments in the rice sector in order to increase production and stabilize market supply through improved research and trading mechanisms.

Today, along with traditional approaches, advanced, innovative solutions are needed to determine new strategic guidelines for the development of the rice sector.

Modern scientific approaches and new technologies make it possible to ensure a sustainable increase in rice productivity, increase the nutritional value of rice, reduce losses from droughts and floods, limit the sector's impact on the environment, and ensure climate optimization of rice production systems.

In this regard, the creation of a platform for knowledge-sharing among the various training and research institutions in OIC/IOFS member states has become very crucial to add value to the

current programme of OIC/IOFS on the development of strategic agricultural commodities (Wheat, Cassava and Rice) in their member states.

A large network of Centres of Excellence would operate to conduct and coordinate training and research programmes among member states in their respective regions. Centres of Excellence shall be promoted widely to secure funding and other material support within and outside the OIC system in order to perform their set tasks. When it is required, a central meeting of all regional Centres of Excellence would be convened to discuss policy coordination and related matters.

Today, we convened a research institute of the Second Asian group of Centers of Excellence for Rice comprising the national research institutions of Kazakhstan, Pakistan, Iran, Afghanistan, Turkey, and Uzbekistan and invited observers as Islamic Development Bank and International Center for Biosaline Agriculture. We will unleash the potential of our participants and together define a strategy for further joint work for mutually beneficial cooperation.

I would like to declare the Inaugural Meeting of the Second Asian subgroup of Centers of Excellence for Rice is open and welcome you all.