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*16<sup>th</sup> HAK Workshop Positive Points & Posterity Suggestions*

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**Closing Remarks by Prof. Dorcas K. Isutsa, during the 16<sup>th</sup> Horticultural Association of Kenya Workshop on Sustainable Horticultural Production in the Tropics held in Chuka University from 28<sup>th</sup> Nov. to 2<sup>nd</sup> Dec. 2016**

Esteemed guests, participants, ladies and gentlemen, I once again stand before you to preside over the closing of the 16<sup>th</sup> HAK Workshop.

I am glad it has gone on well and you have realised the goals you set out to accomplish as you planned the Workshop. A lot must have gone into the planning and for that I appreciate your ingenuity in making sure everyone is taken care of.

**Ladies and Gentlemen**

Allow me to highlight the **positive points** I have really come to like about the contents of this Workshop and also to make **prosperity suggestions** that will go a long way in helping take horticulture to the next level in future.

***Positive Points***

- **Student support:** Students are the future pillars of horticulture. The dedication of the first day to their needs in terms of presenting tips on effective teaching of horticulture by focusing on practicals, problem-solving rather than lectures and abstract learning, and addressing some of the challenges they encounter during the academic journey like publication stress, is a positive point.
- **The plenary lead papers:** They clarify obscure and emerging concepts like research commercialization, patenting, value chains, digitization/automation, and globalization, particularly to budding scholars, and bring all participants on the same wavelength on issues of common interest that can help generate ideas for policy formulation.
- **The three parallel breaker sessions under subthemes:** This arrangement accords each participant maximum benefit from what appeals to them most, maximum interaction with like-minded peers, and a chance to share challenges and joys in their sub-disciplines.

- **The rotation of venues from one institution to another every year:** This strategy demystifies the ivory tower mentality and gives all institutions a chance to become part of the noble course.
- **The excursions:** They allow participants to relax, bond and network further. They help remind us that it needs not all the time be books and laboratories, but one can take time off to relax and enjoy life. It also helps peers and contemporaries familiarise with local environments which then facilitates planning of future collaborations.
- **The sharing of chair and rapporteur slots among the local, national and international organising committee members:** The fair sharing enhances the spirit of workshop ownership to safeguard maximum support of future ones by planning to attend and bring findings to share.
- **The plan to produce proceedings of the workshop and then to upgrade some of the best papers into the AJHS:** This strategy will give participants a chance to get published, market themselves and improve chances of getting promotions and deserved career recognition.
- **The support accorded by the host institution:** This goes a long way in ensuring that rotations are affordable and happening to give as many interested horticulturists a chance to know and join HAK.

### *Prosperity Suggestions*

#### **(1) Enhance participatory horticulture**

Here, I derive my first concern about the dwindling participation of the youth in horticultural and agricultural activities. What should be done to reverse this trend? When all our forefathers and foremothers will no longer have the energy to till our lands, what will future generations feed on? So we need to work on innovations that can attract the youth to patronize horticultural and agricultural activities.

#### *I suggest the following:*

- Digitize/automate horticultural activities and place these under the youth. The work on farm soils can then be handled by the less choosy populace. With this sharing, the future of food security will be a bit secure.
- Mechanize to minimize toil and fatigue so as to attract the youth, and accomplish much work using few hands.

- Offer Scholarships in horticulture and agriculture. This is because some students think that the studies take too long to complete. That is why few of them are not choosing lines like pomology and plant breeding.
- Emphasize biotechnological and molecular methods that expedite research. The same rationale as in the one already given applies here.
- Provide ample laboratory equipment to enhance hands-on learning to minimize the boredom that is the bane of lecture methods.
- Instill affirmative action, gender parity and equity values in horticulture. People should be encouraged to reap where they sow. Good pricing packages should be negotiated and enforced to avoid exploitation by middle merchants so that the youth can reap value for their sweat.
- Develop modern garden centres often found in makeshift structures on highways. These are a business and employment opportunity ventures in this country, but they remain under-exploited. A true garden centre should have plant growing inputs, potted ornamental plants, an eatery, rest and even play area for kids. By exposing young ones to such centres at an early age when they accompany their parents, it might make them grow up wanting to venture into horticultural and agricultural activities.
- Develop Kenyan farms to accommodate Pick Your Own (PYO) concept whereby clients are allowed to go to farms to pick their own fruits, vegetables or potted plants. Again by exposing young ones to such farms at an early age when they accompany their parents, it might make them grow up wanting to venture into horticultural and agricultural activities.
- Fund and insure young agri-preneurs. They often lack capital to help them remain in farming activities. Therefore, youths should be directed to concepts like: Seeds of Gold, Shamba Shape-Up, Smart Farm, Youth Enterprise Fund etc., which could attract them towards horticultural and agricultural activities.
- Enhance ASK shows and Horticultural Fairs attendance by the youth, set up mini-farms, agricultural/horticultural contests, food festivals in learning institutions, and perhaps make agriculture a major course at Form Four level.
  - ⇒ Thus, we need to devise ways to make horticultural and agricultural activities cool to attract the youth.

## **(2) Thoroughly instill the “Sustainable” concept**

This brings me to my second concern on climate change: What can horticulturists do to contribute to conservation of the environment?

### ***I suggest the following:***

- Enhance renewable energy use in the new technologies being developed such as greenhouse farming.
  - Enforce GAP and GMP to avoid environmental pollution through discarding of agricultural wastes that could otherwise be processed into useful products.
  - Enforce conservation policies by emphasizing more organic farming rather than quick fix synthetic solutions.
  - Develop standards and enforce conformity. HAK should be strengthened to become a professionals’ regulatory and even an accrediting body of practitioners, similar to the likes of KVB, KNDU, FPEAK, KEBS etc.
- ⇒ Otherwise in conclusion, you have done well and you are on the right track.
- ⇒ I look forward to seeing you again in future HAK Workshops. Thank you and have safe journeys back to your various destinations
- ⇒ With these many thought-warming remarks, I have the pleasure of declaring the 16<sup>th</sup> HAK Workshop officially closed.

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