

## OPENING ADDRESS

In recent years, several countries in Africa and in the developing tropics have been facing shortage of food in spite of the advances made in agricultural technology in several other parts of the world. The causes for such a food shortage are many and include several constraints to agricultural production. One of the major constraints concerns the attack of the crops by insect pests causing losses in the yields. Urgent need has therefore been felt to improve or develop strategies for reducing these food losses caused by insect pests, thereby increasing the food production. Research on the development of such strategies has been going on in several international and national agricultural centres in different countries and the technology packages developed are being passed on to the farmers and other users from time to time.

However, it is common knowledge that measures to control insect pests are to be adopted only if the attacks by these pests cause losses that are high enough to warrant adoption of and investment in such control measures. In view of this, it is vitally important to have information on the levels of on-farm and post-harvest losses in crops due to various insect pests. There are reports that the grain yield losses, for example in sorghum and maize, due to stem borers range from 30–80% in different countries. Many of these reports are based on rather rough estimates or even on guesses. There is, therefore, an urgent need to generate more reliable information on the extent of crop losses caused by various insect pests in different regions. It is also important to have a knowledge of how the losses due to insects may vary

with different factors such as phenological stages of crops, different crop cultivars, etc., at different times and locations. One of the most crucial requirements for generating valid information on quantitative losses in crops due to insect pests is the accuracy of the method used. Several different methods have been used by different workers to estimate such losses and these methods vary according to the crops and the pests. Most of these methods have their own merits as well as limitations. There is, therefore, a need for standardizing these methods so that the information generated in different regions can be comparable.

It is in the context of the above facts that the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa and the ICIPE are holding the present workshop on “On-farm and post-harvest losses in cereals due to pests and diseases” on this continent.

This Workshop would enable the scientists working in this area to exchange information, review the methodologies for assessing and monitoring crop losses and also review the present status of such losses, including gaps in our knowledge, particularly for eastern and southern African countries. The deliberations of this Workshop are expected to provide guidelines for future strategies for assessing and monitoring the crop losses.

HON. W. NDOLO AYAH, MP  
Minister for Research, Science  
and Technology  
P.O. Box 30040  
Nairobi, Kenya