



# Keynote and Thematic Presentations

Food, Forests, and Farmers  
*Finding Sustainable Pathways for the Future*

# ABSTRACT

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ACADÉMIE  
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SUPÉRIEUR

## Food, Forests, and Farmers *Finding Sustainable Pathways for the Future*



### ABSTRACT

## **Righting our relationships to food, to people, and to the planet will require both courage and humility**

by Josianne Gauthier<sup>1</sup>

We have come a long way in a relatively short amount of time. In just the last century, the global economic growth, the technological and scientific advances, and the mobility we have acquired have become normal to us. To a certain degree we have also seen advances in recognizing the human rights of discriminated groups and an end to such aberrations as institutionalized slavery and apartheid. But how did we get here? It was not necessarily a clean path. When we look at the road we have traveled, we notice how we have also trampled on the land and stolen it from the people who inhabited it, and disrupted and uprooted the plant and animal life that once flourished there. We see the cultures erased, the knowledge and expertise lost or forgotten, and we are faced with the very high price paid for the luxuries and way of life we are now accustomed to. Too many relationships have been broken or wounded on this journey and we are at a critical point in history, surrounded by the terrifying noise of the multiple crises we have created or exacerbated: ecological, health (mental and physical), social, economic, humanitarian, cultural, and of course political. How we respond, how we choose to act now, will have an impact on the generations to come. What guides our decisions will influence the outcomes of our efforts. Can we be inspired into action and choices out of love, solidarity, courage, caring, and hope? Can we choose this path rather than profit, fear, anger, indifference, and disillusionment? What concrete values and principles can help us frame our path towards a more just, inclusive, and sustainable relationship to food, to land, to forests, and to people? Let us draw lessons from our own collective experiences and let us put forward the wisdom, the voices, and the knowledge and practices that have already demonstrated their worth and feasibility. Real solutions will not come from the same systems that have brought us to this point. We must be prepared to listen with humility and then act with courage and creativity.



### ABSTRACT

## **Degraded lands and marginalized people: What future for our forests, farms, and farmers?**

by Dr C.T.S. Nair<sup>1</sup>

Forests, farms and farmers, the very foundation of a society's existence, are facing multiple threats. There are some 608 million farms of which 90 percent are family farms, producing 80 percent of our food in value terms. Notwithstanding their vital importance, we have created a socio-economic system that has made farming the most unattractive and unremunerative occupation. Survival as a small farmer these days is extremely challenging, and it is not surprising that farmer suicides have become widespread. The decline of farms and forests and the marginalization of farmers are symptomatic of the larger crisis that the world is confronting. There are two broad related trends that have been operating for the last few decades namely:

- A shift away from dependence on natural systems and processes and increased reliance on fossil fuel-dependent technologies; and
- Increasing concentration of production in the hands of a few, especially corporate interests.

The development paradigms pursued in the last many decades, emphasizing on economic growth, and building an urban industrial society relying on non-renewable resources, have bled all the three – the farms, the forests, and the farmers. In the name of enhancing productivity a host of technologies have been introduced resulting in the environmental crises like land degradation, desertification, deforestation, loss of biodiversity, depletion, and pollution of water, and above all climate change with all its multiple manifestations. The scenarios that may emerge from what is being done now is just the opposite of what was envisaged to be accomplished under the SDGs. This presentation discusses some of the critical issues in rebuilding a prosperous, healthy, and vibrant economy bringing forests, farms, and farmers to the centre-stage of development agenda.



### ABSTRACT

## **Demand and challenges of HYV corn production in the Philippines and the possible ways to improve value chain productivity for our smallholder farmers**

by Dr. Artemio Salazar<sup>1</sup>

Demand for feed grains, mainly yellow corn, will continue to increase in our country due to our penchant for meat. However, the issue of too much rain at harvest during the major corn production season i.e. wet season, was not promptly and significantly addressed though production area, even in environmentally unsuitable areas, and yield were increasing due to increasing use of GMO seeds monopolized by multinationals. Hence farmers had good harvest, but the buying price was low because of shortage of post-harvest facility (drying and storage). This is a serious problem in Luzon and even in Mindanao where due to more favorable rainfall distribution, corn can be grown and harvested almost year-round. This problem is compounded by the low tariff corn substitute: feed wheat.

The most affected in this situation, income and environmental-wise, and are the smallholder farmers in far flung areas who depend on this crop for livelihood. Inputs are more expensive and corn buying price is lower due to logistics problem.

In addition to lobbying for substantial support to more post harvest facilities, PhilMaize is lobbying to allow local seed companies to use GMO genes that have been deregulated in its country of origin. This will bring down the cost of seeds.

Some measures by UPLB to help the small farmers include development by BioTech of soil microbial inoculant to reduce dependence on inorganic fertilizer. There is also a program at IPB to use native varieties to develop stress tolerant and higher yielding open-pollinated varieties. An inexpensive but efficient mobile corn mill has also been developed to cater to families living in far-flung areas. Different cropping systems have also been explored to enhance income, food security and environmental sustainability i.e. more corn, but not only corn.

<sup>1</sup> Former National Corn Coordinator, Department of Agriculture, Philippines