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Press Release

2nd Post Harvest Congress opens with emphasis on increased funding and stakeholder coordination

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia: September 17, 2019: Africa's total quantitative food loss has been estimated to be over 100 million MT/year. For grains alone, the value of postharvest losses is estimated to equate to approximately USD 4 billion/year (at 2007 prices), which could meet the annual food requirements of about 48 million people.

The value of food loss exceeds the annual value of grain imports into Africa. These losses exacerbate food insecurity and have negative impacts on the environment through wasting precious land, water, farm inputs and energy used in producing food that is not consumed. In addition, postharvest losses reduce income to farmers and contribute to higher food prices.

These are some of the grim statistics that have come out of the 2nd All Africa Post Harvest Loss Congress that opened yesterday. The congress is themed "Postharvest Loss Reduction and Agro-processing: Drivers of Agricultural Transformation in Africa."

"It goes without saying, then, that tackling food loss is critical to our continent. Hence it is time for us to take action," said AUC Commissioner for Economic Affairs, H.E Prof. Victor Harrison representing Commissioner for Rural Economy and Agriculture, H.E Amb. Josefa Sacko, at the official opening of the Congress.

In recognition of the devastating effects of Post-Harvest Loss and food waste, the African Union Heads of State and Government included in their 2014 Malabo Declaration, a call to reduce postharvest losses in Africa by 50 percent by the year 2025.

In addition, African Union Commission, with support from partners Rockefeller Foundation and FAO developed the African Union Post-Harvest Loss Management Strategy.

“This strategy will support our 55 member states in implementing actions at all levels in agricultural and food value chains to reduce post-harvest losses on our continent. It is the first-ever post-harvest loss strategy for the continent and a clear demonstration of the African Union’s commitment to continue to provide the right strategies and frameworks to guide our member states to increase agricultural productivity, create jobs, and improve incomes through strengthening our value chains and by reducing post-harvest losses,” said H.E Harrison.

Further given the scale of the greenhouse gas impact of food loss and waste, the AU’s Department of Rural Economy and Agriculture is working with AU member states to include measures to reduce food loss and waste in their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) to the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. These measures include policies, programs, practices, and technologies that reduce food losses on the farm, during storage and distribution, at market, and in the home.

Officially opening the Congress, Director of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation and also Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) Focal Point at Ethiopia’s Ministry of Agriculture, Mr. Zena Habtewold, said the Ethiopian Government was committed to addressing the major policy bottlenecks to reduce food loss and waste thereby contributing to food and nutrition security.

Mr. Habtewold highlighted areas to be tackled in order to combat the scourge saying, “Africa’s post-harvest management needs skilled people; proper qualitative and quantitative data; and action based on research and testing.”

He further emphasized on reasonable resource allocation to combat PHL as well as a well-coordinated stakeholder intervention.

The official opening included remarks from the following representatives of partners working with the AUC to tackle PHL and Food Waste, namely: Embassy of the Netherlands; Food and Agriculture Organisation of the UN; World Resource Institute; University of Nairobi; Stellenbosch University; World Food Programme (WFP); The Rockefeller Foundation; Sasakawa Africa Association (SAA); Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA) and the African Development Bank.

The African Union Commission in close collaboration with the University of Nairobi have resolved to institutionalize the All Africa Postharvest Congress and Exhibition as a biennial event that brings together diverse stakeholders including policy makers, private sector actors, development agencies, civil society, researchers, academics, farmers, processors and other key Stakeholders to learn, share information, build networks and partnerships aimed at addressing the pertinent issue of postharvest loss reduction in the African context.

Specific objectives of the Congress include: to raise awareness on food losses and waste through data and information sharing; Showcase effective strategies, technologies, practices, initiatives for postharvest loss reduction; Monitor and review progress on postharvest loss reduction initiatives against set targets; and build and strengthen linkages and partnerships for resource mobilization and other activities geared towards postharvest loss reduction.

The four day Congress is organized by the African Union Commission in collaboration with the University of Nairobi, Stellenbosch University and Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology.

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