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# MESSAGE

**Eufemio T. Rasco, Jr.**

Chair, Steering Committee of the 46<sup>th</sup> ASM

*Magandang araw!*

Welcome to the 46th Annual Scientific Meeting of the National Academy of Science and Technology, Philippines. This meeting is the culmination of three meetings focused on the same theme that we conducted over the last four months in Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao.

In these preliminary meetings, we emphasized the value of the systems approach in understanding the problems of agriculture and fishery. Indeed, we talked about transforming the food system, not only transforming agriculture. This is a significant departure from previous meetings that our Agriculture Sciences Division has organized, which were overly concerned with increasing farm (and fishery) productivity.

Our theme is a call for implementation of national plans that were crafted over the last two years. These plans recognized the interconnectedness of farming, the environment, and consumer health. To transform agriculture, we must look for solutions outside farming.

This meeting is very timely because of the sense of helplessness pervading in society today over the issues of poverty in the farms, degradation of the environment, and food-related decline of consumer health. We will explore out-of-the-box solutions, all of them requiring modern technology and more. Appropriate policies are also important, but the critical requirement is a change in consumer habits. This latter solution is unique in the existing national plans.

Over the next two days, we will attempt to synthesize the outputs of the regional meetings. We will also explore solutions and ideas that may have been missed in these meetings. Consistent with the transdisciplinary nature of our theme, we will have inputs from all fields of science and technology.

We expect that these meetings will produce not only resolutions as traditionally expected, but more significantly, action plans and commitments to implement them by the different stakeholders who are here today. The key to the solution of our complex food system problems based on our analysis is both simple and very challenging. The key does not depend on the activity of any agency, government, or otherwise. We stare at this solution three times a day! It is in our choice of food. Thus, it is a solution that is perfectly within our control.

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*Dr. Eufemio T. Rasco Jr. is recognized for his pioneering and outstanding contributions in the field of plant breeding, specifically tropical vegetables and tropical white potato breeding. As team leader, he led the development of hybrids of ampalaya, squash, tomato, eggplant, chili, cabbage and open-pollinated onion at East West Seed Company widely distributed in the country and other parts of Asia. At the Institute of Plant Breeding, University of the Philippines Los Banos (UPLB), the cultivars of upo, squash and ampalaya he developed with students and co-workers are still widely utilized by farmers.*