

OFFICE OF THE VICE-CHANCELLOR



WACCI'S 16TH ANNIVERSARY CONFERENCE AND ALUMNI HOMECOMING

ADDRESS BY:

**PROFESSOR NANA ABA APPIAH AMFO
VICE - CHANCELLOR, UNIVERSITY OF GHANA**

**THURSDAY, JUNE 1, 2023
WACCI, UNIVERSITY OF GHANA**



Hon. Minister for Food and Agriculture and Member of Parliament for Abetifi
Constituency, Dr. Bryan Acheampong,
Guest of Honour, Dr. Joe DeVries,
Co-founder of WACCI, Emeritus Professor Ronnie Coffman of Cornell
University,
Our Distinguished Keynote Speaker and Director of the Cambridge Crop Science
Centre, Professor Giles Oldroyd,
Pro Vice-Chancellors,
Registrar of the University of Ghana, Mrs. Emelia Agyei-Mensah,
Provost of the College of Basic and Applied Sciences, Prof. Boateng Onwona-
Agyeman
Representatives from Partner Institutions: AGRA, World Bank and DAAD,
Officials of Sister Universities Represented: Cornell University, University of
Illinois, University of Zagreb and University of the Free State, South Africa,
Regulatory Bodies including GTEC and AAU,
Senior Officers of the University of Ghana: Deans, Directors, Heads of
Department,
Staff and Students,
Proud Alumni of WACCI,
Ladies and Gentlemen of the Press,
Invited Guests,

It is with great pleasure that I chair the 16th Anniversary Conference and Alumni Homecoming of the West Africa Centre for Crop Improvement (WACCI), one of few World Bank Centres of Excellence proudly hosted by the University of Ghana.

WACCI, which was established in June 2007 as a partnership between the University of Ghana and Cornell University with funding from the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA), has grown into a formidable Centre for post-graduate training and research in crop improvement in Africa. This is evident in the Centre's recognition as a global knowledge hub for scientific research and the award of its Founding Director as the recipient of the 2022 Africa Food Price Award.

Through our research institutions such as WACCI, University of Ghana is fulfilling its mission of remaining increasingly relevant to national and global development through cutting-edge research as well as high quality teaching and learning. WACCI graduates have released and continue to release improved varieties of maize, rice, millet, casava and sweet potatoes and have published in top-tier peer-review scientific journals, obtaining grants for the support of crop improvement across the sub-region. As a research-intensive university, we take

pride in WACCI's success story, its remarkable milestones and the progress made researching into crop improvement.

In marking WACCI's 16th anniversary, WACCI alumni from 15 countries together with global partners and stakeholders (both internal and external) have converged in this auditorium for a crucial deliberation that will take WACCI to the next level. The theme for this year's conference, "*Harnessing Human Capital in Plant Breeding for the Future of Food Security in Africa*," underscores WACCI's pivotal role in addressing the issue of food security in Africa. We are privileged to have the Director of the Centre of Crop Science, University of Cambridge, to deliver the keynote address on the topic "*Global Impact of Plant Breeding on Food Security and the Role of Higher Education*".

Distinguished ladies and gentlemen, recent global occurrences including climate change, conflict, and pandemics has brought to the fore the need to urgently consider measures that can address food insecurity especially in Africa. With WACCI's mandate to develop the next generation of plant breeders and seed scientists for the transformation of Africa's agriculture, its role in improving food security cannot be overemphasized.

This conference which also serves as homecoming to about 120 alumni of WACCI is an opportunity for networking, knowledge sharing, and forging collaborations that will shape the future of plant breeding education and research

in Africa. I commend the management and staff of WACCI for their diligent planning and execution of this year's conference and first alumni homecoming to be held.

As University of Ghana commemorates its 75th anniversary, we hold our heads high for the quality education we deliver across various disciplines, which has earned us the recognition as the leading university in Ghana, second-best in West Africa and among highly ranked universities in the world according to the recently published 2023 Centre for World University Rankings (CWUR). The work undertaken by WACCI over these years has certainly contributed to this global visibility and impact.

Congratulation to the faculty, staff, and partners for their unwavering commitment to WACCI's mission. As we look ahead, let's harness our human capital, diverse experiences, and shared vision to realize the full potential of plant breeding for the future of food security in Africa.

I am confident that, with the continued support and collaboration of all, we can overcome challenges that lie ahead. Together, we can promote the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 2 which focuses on addressing issues of food security, ending hunger, improving nutrition, and promoting sustainable agriculture.

To guests who may be visiting University of Ghana for the first time, please make some time during your stay here to explore our beautiful campus with breathtaking biodiversity. To our cherished alumni, we are happy you were able to make time off your busy schedule to participate in this conference. We are proud of you for your remarkable contributions in your respective organizations and encourage you to continue to blaze the trail to make University of Ghana proud. We welcome you warmly back home, do enjoy your stay and re-live all the nostalgic memories of your student days.

On this note, I congratulate WACCI once again on your 16th Anniversary and look forward to an enlightening Conference together with the exciting line-up of programmes planned for this year's conference.

Thank you, distinguished ladies and gentlemen for your attention.

Prof. Nana Aba Appiah Amfo

Vice-Chancellor

June 1, 2023

