DIRECTOR’S WELCOME SPEECH TO 27TH SOIL SCIENCE SOCIETY OF EAST AFRICA (SSSEA) AND THE 6TH AFRICAN SOIL SCIENCE SOCIETY (ASSS)

The Agriculture Secretary
The Governor, Nakuru County
Invited guests
Participants
Ladies and Gentlemen
I am delighted to welcome you to the 27th Soil Science Society of East Africa (SSSEA) and the 6th African Soil Science Society (ASSS). As you are all aware, there is severe land degradation manifested by soil erosion (water and wind), soil nutrient depletion without nutrient replenishment due to continuous cultivation, deteriorating soil health, declining soil fertility, poor agronomic practices and loss of biodiversity. Climate change is also a factor of concern due to its impacts such as severe soil desiccation from prolonged dry spells followed by loss of soil from subsequent intense rainfall. The major causes of degradation in East Africa and indeed the whole of Africa are growing populations and increasing demand for food and cash income, extensification rather than intensification of agriculture, inadequate use of conservation agriculture, limited support by local governments and institutions. The increasing land degradation, impacts of climate change, drought and desertification results in lower productivity of arable lands and ecosystem services. This situation has direct effects on agriculture particularly in engaging in agriculture as a business. It is in view of this that the Soil Science Society of East Africa in collaboration with African Soil Science Society have organized a joint conference to critically analyze Land and Water Management (LWM) technologies, innovative products and services; and strategies benefiting small-scale agriculture in Africa.

Ladies and gentlemen, I am informed that this conference will focus on the contribution of land and water management in the Agricultural Production Value Chains, addressing threats
and opportunities associated with climate change, and scaling up of proven technologies for transformational impact on the livelihoods of small-scale farmers in Africa. In addition, land use planning and policy in line with the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP’s) goal of eliminating hunger and reducing poverty through agriculture, will be addressed during this conference. The conference will also touch on the pillars relating to sustainable land management; market access; increasing food supply and reducing hunger. I am therefore greatly encouraged by this joint initiative between Soil Science Society of East Africa and African Soil Science Society in delivering these services.

Ladies and gentlemen, this conference has attracted re-known and distinguished scientists among other speakers. Over 200 participants from Africa, Asia and Europe are attending this conference. It will be conducted through plenary sessions, moderated discussion fora, round table discussions, exhibitions and plenary presentations in three parallel sessions. Considering the wide range of themes that will be covered in this conference, I am sure the outputs will greatly contribute to improved agricultural productivity in smallholder African farms. I therefore sincerely wish to thank the organizers of this Conference and look forward to seeing the dissemination of conference outputs through Conference Proceedings, book chapters and other relevant media.

Ladies and gentlemen, the Kenya Agricultural Research Institute (KARI) has hosted the secretariat of the Soil Science Society of East Africa Kenya chapter over many years. In the preparation of this conference meeting where the African Soil Science Society is also involved, KARI provided the human resource, infrastructure and logistical support to ensure the meeting becomes a success. I am happy to be associated this partnership because KARI has always encouraged its scientists to conduct multidisciplinary research and share knowledge with other relevant research and academic institutions both in the country and outside. I would also like to
welcome those who wish to visit our game parks and other sceneries of interest to do so. Kenyans are friendly and hospitable people while our hotels offer interesting and tasty cuisine. Please do not forget to sample our delicious “Nyama choma” while in the country.

With these remarks, ladies and gentlemen, it is my honour and pleasure to welcome you to the 27th Soil Science Society of East Africa and the 6th African Soil Science Society joint conference.

THANK YOU
REMARKS BY THE NAKURU GOVERNOR ON 21ST OCTOBER 2013 DURING THE OPENING OF THE 6TH AFRICAN SOIL SCIENCE SOCIETY AND 27TH SOIL SCIENCE SOCIETY OF EAST AFRICA CONFERENCE, AT CATHAY HOTEL NAKURU

The Principal Secretary, State Dept for Agriculture
Director-KARI,
Executives, Soil Science Society of East Africa & African Soil Science Society,
Provincial Heads,
Distinguished Guests,
Esteemed Farmers & Research Scientists,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you all to Nakuru County, for the 6th African Soil Science Society and 27th Soil Science Society of East Africa Conference. I also wish thank the Principal Secretary for Agriculture Sicily Kariuki for finding time to be with us here today in Nakuru.

The Nakuru County Government is honored to host so many Land and Water Management scientists and professionals from the agricultural and rural development sector, including the international agricultural research institutions and the private sector. Thank you for making time to join us and Karibuni Kenya!
This Conference is significant for us in Kenya because we have embarked on a devolved government system to improve efficiency in the delivery of services to Kenyans, which require the involvement of different stakeholders. The County Government of Nakuru is proud to host this international conference, and will seek to harness synergies and complementarities in agricultural expertise from different players including agricultural research to infuse efficiency and effectiveness for transformational impact of the county’s agricultural landscape. I believe that the resolutions from this gathering will certainly apply to many other parts of Kenya, East Africa, and the whole continent.

**Ladies and Gentlemen,** policy makers at national and in international level face challenges with the changing face of agriculture in the 21st century especially in formulation of policies that support the effort to lift millions of people out of poverty and hunger as well as reduce the impact of agriculture on the environment and sustain water and land resources. These are issues that go beyond national boundaries. One thing I would urge you to remember is that as policy makers, we are often blamed for not formulating suitable policies but as scientists, you share in this blame as well since without empirical evidence from among you in this room, policy making may not end up bringing the required fundamental changes in our societies.

**Ladies and Gentlemen** Nakuru is a key agricultural hub located in the Central Rift Valley Region of Kenya. The County in an area of 7,495.1 km² and has a human population of 1,603,325. It is endowed with 14 agro ecological zones thus accommodating a wide range of crops. Agriculture is the main source of livelihood for our people. The main cash crops grown are wheat, pyrethrum, and horticulture while the main food crops are maize, beans, Irish potatoes and sweet potatoes. Horticulture (vegetables, flowers and fruits) is a major enterprise both for local and international markets. Most Kenyan flowers in European market come from Nakuru county.
We host some important agricultural institutions in the country which include Egerton University, Kenya Plant Health Inspectorate Services-Nakuru region, four KARI Centres of Naivasha, Njoro, Lanet, and Molo, Baraka Agricultural College, Dairy Training Institute, and Agricultural Development Corporation farm, Lanet. In addition we have a fertilizer company, Mea Ltd.

I'am aware that we have adopted the agricultural Product Value Chain approach characterized by vertical and horizontal linkages comprising resource management, production, post harvest processing, and marketing. This county is also well served by post harvest processing and marketing infrastructure along this chain such as cereal stores, grain handlers, canning, milling, refineries and dairy collecting enterprises. I believe that Nakuru County has a lot of potential in agriculture, which is if harnessed efficiently will enable realizing the Kenya development blueprint, Vision 2030. Apart from reducing extreme hunger, malnutrition and poverty, we aspire to generate employment for the poor, women and youth by commercializing agriculture in Nakuru county.

As you continue with your deliberations, it is my hope that you will also make time to visit spectacular tourist sites in Nakuru namely; Lake Nakuru National Park, Hell’s Gate, Menengai and Longonot Craters, Naivasha and Elementaita Lakes, Hyrax Hill and the Mau Forest. The Great Rift Valley, also a tourist attraction runs through this County and has topography characterized into three:

- The Mau Escarpment with average annual rainfall of 1,270mm and covering areas of over 2,400 meters above sea level.
- The valley floor with lakes and volcanoes at 1,520 metres to 1,890 metres above sea level.
- The Kinangop escarpment in the East at 2,100 to 2,500 metres above sea level

The County government has committed itself to support you, and we hope to be with you again during the closing ceremony. Let me once again thank you for having chosen Nakuru to be the venue for this meeting.

Thank you - Asanteni

Conference Opening Speech for the Principal Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries Development


Director, Kenya Agricultural Research Institute

Directors, Sister Research Institutes

The Governor, Nakuru County

The Chairman, African Soil Science Society

The Chairman Soil Science Society of Eastern Africa

Executive Committee Members of the Soil Science Society of Eastern Africa

 Participating Researchers & Scientists

Invited Guests

Participants

Ladies and Gentlemen

It gives me great pleasure to be here today to officially open the 27th Soil Science Society of Eastern Africa and 6th African Soil Science Society Conference
I am impressed by the theme of the conference namely:

“Transforming Rural Livelihoods in Africa: How can land and water management contribute to enhanced food security and address climate change adaptation and mitigation?” because it is very relevant to the Kenyan situation, in particular and Africa in general.

The current situation in Kenya is such that it requires a total transformation of rural livelihoods through revolutionaryizing agriculture into commercialised enterprises. As it is now, most agricultural products in Kenya are produced by smallholder farmers who do not or add little value to their agricultural products. Our focus is on these farmers whose capacities we want to enhance towards adopting and improving agricultural products values chains - toward improved agricultural commercialization. The policy environment will be reviewed to provide enabling conditions for this.

Ladies and gentlemen, it is worth noting that the importance of agricultural sector in Kenya cannot be overemphasised since it is the mainstay of the Kenya’s economy, accounting for:

- Over 26% of Kenya’s GDP
- 60% of export earnings, and
- Employing over 80% of Kenya’s workforce.

While the crops sub-sector contributes 60% of the agricultural GDP, the livestock and fisheries sub-sectors contribute the remaining 40%.

However, agriculture has at the same time experienced some negative growth rates in the recent past. Further, like in the rest of Sub-Saharan Africa, Kenya’s agriculture is mainly rain-fed and therefore highly vulnerable to climate change and variability.

It is also known that in Kenya agricultural growth is constrained by, among other factors, declining per capita land resource, resource degradation and declining soil
fertility, increasing climate change and variability, limited appropriate technological options, and inadequate transfer of appropriate technologies. These problems are further compounded by the fact that Kenya is among the sub-Saharan countries whose agricultural development lags behind her population growth. This has contributed significantly to the high poverty levels in the country.

In view of the declining land holdings, agricultural growth must now be led by enhanced technology development, dissemination and adoption as well as enterprise intensification and substitution all geared towards high value agricultural products with potential for processing. There is also need for small scale farmers to diversify and specialize in at least 2-3 enterprises in which they have comparative advantages.

Ladies and gentlemen, I am delighted to note that during this conference, a particular focus is being dedicated in dealing with the contribution of Land and Water Resource Management in the Agricultural Production Value Chains. This focus is particularly addressing threats and opportunities associated with climate change, and the scaling up of proven technologies and innovations for transformational impact on the livelihoods of African small-scale farmers. This focus will encompass land use planning and policy issues. I am also told that the conference touches on the pillars relating to sustainable land management; market access; increasing food supply and reducing hunger, all of which are in tandem with the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme goal of eliminating hunger and reducing poverty through agriculture. Further, I am also informed that this will be achieved through presentations of research findings, technology dissemination and adoption. Outputs from the conference will also contribute towards informing the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment.

Ladies and Gentlemen, I am also happy to learn that the SSSEA and ASSS have over the years contributed towards the growth of the agricultural sectors of many African countries, Kenya included. The Societies, which I understand are not-for-profit
making, have provided opportunities for interactive information exchange through biennial regional forums to diverse soil scientists and associated professionals from Africa and indeed the world over. I understand that the forums bring together researchers from national and international organizations, universities, extension workers, NGOs, policy makers, farmers, civil society, the private sector and other relevant stakeholders.

I am also told that this conference has attracted about 200 professionals and practitioners in agriculture and rural development. The participants are drawn from Africa, USA, Australia, India, and Europe. While participants from Kenya, South Africa, Zambia, Tanzania, Uganda, Rwanda, Nigeria, Cameroon, Ivory Coast, Australia and India will be presenting papers in this joint conference, I am encouraging them to also sample Kenyan social life and enjoy our beautiful scenery of the Great Rift Valley.

Discussions and recommendations will be generated through invited keynote papers, thematic oral and poster presentations, exhibitions by researchers, farmers, private sector and conducting a field excursion. The expected outputs will include proceedings of the conference, refereed journal papers, book chapters from the various thematic areas, farmer extension leaflets, and policy briefs. These outputs are expected to impact positively on food security and the livelihoods of African farmers.

With those few remarks, it is now my pleasant duty to declare this 27th Soil Science Society of Eastern Africa and 6th African Soil Science Society Conference officially open.

Thank you.

Nakuru 22 October 2013
Esteemed Scientists, Farmers,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

- It is a great honor for me to make closing remarks for the 6th African Soil Science Society and 27th Soil Science Society of East Africa Conference.
- I wish thank the national and county governments who in one way or another supported this meeting and all of you for having found time to be with us here in Nakuru. I also wish thank all the presenters of the various papers and the organizers for who worked tirelessly to ensure that the conference was a success.
- As I participated in this week long conference, I had an opportunity to share discussions, knowledge, information and technology in the plenary and parallel sessions and I am convinced that all these big ideas will be harnessed to improve agricultural productivity on smallholder farms in Africa.
- The Soil Atlas of Africa book, a collaborative initiative of the Joint Research Centre (JRC) of the European Commission (EC), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and the Africa Soil Science Society (ASSS) launched here. The atlas collects vital information on African soils and highlights the importance of this non-renewable resource. The bottom line is, soils of Africa have a crucial role in climate change adaptation and mitigation polices and they are the basis for sustainable development and food security
- Ladies and Gentlemen, as we Soil Scientists pick our bags heading home, we don’t need to be reminded that soils of Africa are severely degraded by
erosion and excessive nutrient depletion. This explains the low productivity of the soils, mainly due to lack of plant nutrients, not adequately replenished by artificial fertilizers. We are informed that on average, African farmers, due to poverty, are able to apply only 10% of the nutrients that farmers in the rest of the world return to the soil.

- **Sadly,** Africa is the only continent in the world where the annual per capita food production lags behind population growth. The fundamental root cause of this decline is land degradation and soil fertility decline over time. This calls for synergies and complementarities from different players including the national and international level policy makers and scientists to infuse synergies for the sustainable management of this resource capital.

- We interacted with farmers who challenged us to improve the livelihoods of our people, and we must take up this challenge.

- Finally, this conference has recognized and re-affirmed the expertise and commitment of its members, to support widespread dissemination and use of knowledge from research and experiences of projects dealing with sustainable land management. We soil scientists have also made a commitment to implement urgent actions to meet the current and future challenges in Africa and for this purpose, call for a political support and for a significant increase of investments to result in an increased productivity and preservation of soil resources, particularly by African governments.

**Thank you all and Kwaheri!**