

Dr David Lawrence

Minister, High Commissioner, ladies and gentlemen.

Syngenta is delighted to be partnering the Royal Society of Chemistry on this project. I believe The Pan Africa Chemistry Network will play an important role in enabling scientists to communicate more effectively. It will also assist in the vital task of improving scientific education in schools and universities. This will help build local capability and capacity in order to translate the Millennium Development Goals into reality.

Agriculture is a critical stepping stone to increasing economic growth and reducing extreme poverty, one of the key Millennium Development Goals.

For the first time in our history there are now more people living in urban areas than in the country and working on the land to produce food, yet three quarters of the world's poor continue to live in rural areas. Most of them depend on agriculture for a living. We therefore have to work together to ensure that through agricultural technology we can feed an ever growing world population and lift the rural population out of poverty.

Investment in agriculture brings with it investment in transport, communication, water, power, education, health. Increases in agricultural yield lead directly to reductions in the population living on less than one dollar a day. Doing this sustainably is essential and technology lies at the heart of the challenge.

It has been estimated that without crop protection products, 35 to 40 percent of arable food crops would be lost to pests and diseases each year. We invest \$800m each year in research and development in agriculture as we help farmers across the world to improve agricultural productivity. How else are we going to feed more than 8 billion people on this planet in 2030, if we don't embrace existing and future technologies?

This is why we are partnering with the RSC to create this first hub of the network in Kenya. This will foster communication among scientists which I personally strongly support.

As the largest supplier in our industry to the African continent, Syngenta already plays an important role in the Kenyan economy. We employ over 2000 people in our seeds and crop protection businesses. We also have a vector control business to help the fight against malaria, another of the Millennium Development Goal's. We estimate we have already provided protection from malaria for over 2.5 million people across the region.

The Syngenta Foundation for Sustainable Agriculture also works with local partners, through conventional seed breeding, on new corn varieties that are resistant to pests such as the corn borer.

We are a key partner for flower growers in Kenya who meet the demanding quality standards of the European consumer and who, through their large presence in Kenya, have a major impact on rural, social and economic development.

Our people in Kenya are as excited by this initiative with the RSC as I am. They will be playing their full part to make this project real.

Sustainable agriculture is not just about growing crops to feed today's population. It is about growing for today in a way which benefits people tomorrow. This means optimizing the use of our natural resources, safeguarding wild spaces and biodiversity, ensuring clean water, and contributing to the improved health and well-being of people everywhere.

The Syngenta hub will develop a means by which our African scientist colleagues can work more effectively together and ultimately deliver these sustainable objectives for the continent.

The Network is about partnership with the Federation of African Societies of Chemistry and chemists. At an academic level we shall support education with fellowships and grants. Scientific connections will be made through conferences and seminars. We shall help bring entrepreneurial ideas to fruition by holding workshops on how to write effective grant applications. Such grants are vital in securing funds for innovation and progress. The entrepreneurial skills and training which we shall foster are an essential component in creating a dynamic economy.

Connecting scientists and sharing knowledge and extending scientific education we shall be helping to develop the economy of African states. With a developing agricultural base comes the economic infrastructure of transportation, clean water, power and education. Good food, produced in a non-labour intensive manner using modern technologies, is key to a better future. As nutrition improves so does health and productivity. Increased productivity releases people from the land. With better education, starts a process of rural development.

Better education is vital for emerging markets. That is why I am particularly pleased that as part of the Syngenta hub we shall have a schools component. We are creating an annual chemistry competition. The aim of the competition is to enthuse children about chemistry and to teach them about the role it plays in sustainable agriculture. We want children to be intrigued and enquiring about science, to enjoy chemistry and perhaps eventually to see it as a career as our other speakers today have done.

Stewardship will play an essential part in the programme. Every year across the world we train over 5 million farmers about the safe and correct use of chemicals. If we educate children about safety we shall also reach their parents as we have shown in other continents.

The benefits of our partnership with the RSC on this project will also be complemented by the work of the Syngenta Foundation for Sustainable Agriculture, which is working with the Rockefeller Foundation to increase the number of women scientists in Africa.

I am personally very excited by the Network's potential. Syngenta is totally behind this project, not just financially but working in partnership on the ground. In five years time when the first hub is able to stand on its own, it will be the sustainable heart of a network that we hope will span the continent.