

## Welcome of Participants

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Ladies, gentlemen, and guests of honor. On behalf of the Thailand Department of Agriculture, I am very pleased to have the opportunity to meet and welcome you to my country and this conference. You are our guests and are among friends as well as colleagues. Any services that we can render to make your stay here more pleasant is available upon your request and please do not hesitate to let us know. We wish your visit here to be both informative and enjoyable.

The formation of this working group and the initiation of research on root-knot nematodes in this region of the world has been through your interests and efforts. We face this problem with much in common and cooperation and exchange of knowledge such as through this meeting will surely help provide some useful answers.

Root-knot nematodes are definitely of economic importance, although they are frequently overlooked as the cause of crop or plant declines because of their occurrence below soil surface level and the widespread lack of ability to recognize their symptoms. On legumes such as soybean, they are frequently

mistaken to be the nitrogen fixing nodules of *Rhizobium* bacteria even though their interior color differs. They commonly are responsible for reduction in crop yields when other factors such as drought are thought to be at fault. Many have numerous alternate hosts, are cosmopolitan in distribution, and can persist for long periods of time in the soil in the absence of crop hosts. Realization of their significance has helped implement serious research efforts in many countries and has led to the development of international cooperation and programmes in six regions of the world. In Thailand, root-knot nematodes damage vegetables, upland crops, fruit trees, and ornamentals. Participation in international programmes involving exchange of knowledge and cooperative research activities will contribute to agricultural production within Thailand and in other countries as well. With these benefits in mind, the Thailand Department of Agriculture promotes and encourages all developments and activities that lead to better management of these destructive pests.

May I wish the conference every success and remind you that we hope your stay here will be most enjoyable as well as informative.