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International Agri-Food Network, Private Sector Speakers
FAO Director General Meeting
A.G. Kawamura, President, Solutions from the Land
The 21st Century Agriculture Renaissance

Good day to your Excellency, Dr QU, thank you for this opportunity to share some thoughts on the future of our global food system.

The 21st Century Agricultural Renaissance is in full stride. In just the last 100 years a cascade of new knowledge, technology, invention and innovation has opened the door for a Change of Theory in how mankind might achieve the UN's Sustainable Development Goals and the critical role that successful agriculture will need to play.

What does a Renaissance look like? In 44 years of harvest on my vegetable farm, we have moved from furrow to sprinkler to precision drip irrigation and fertigation. We've shifted from molecular chemistry pest-control to Integrated Pest Management (IPM), to bio-control with predators and microbial antagonists. Our soil amendments have included animal manure, petroleum based NPK products, green waste compost, seaweed extracts, fish and bone meal, earthworm castings, pulverized volcanic rocks. We experiment with oxygen enriched nano-bubbles, soil-less hydroponics, aquaponics and aeroponics in arrays of vertical and horizontal above ground systems. We conduct field trials of drought, heat, salt and disease tolerant new cultivars. We use satellite guided tractors and anticipate hydrogen fuel cells tractors, autonomous harvest vehicles and robotics in the years ahead...always adding to our dynamic and expanding tool box. We have learned to partner with farmers in other countries and find out that they have learned to grow crops better than we do and together we learn how to be better, safer and more efficient. With each season this "leap-frogging" of capacity and technology is accelerating across the planet.

In an Agricultural Renaissance, humanity shifts towards a new framework of whatever is possible is feasible and whatever is feasible is now achievable in record time. Imagine stewards of the land, on whatever continent they reside in, being recognized valued and compensated –not just for the food, feed and fiber they sustainably produce, but for the equally important water they filter and store, biodiversity and wildlife habitat they enhance, soil carbon they sequester, clean energy they generate, and perhaps most importantly, for the livelihoods they improve. Given the unpredictable and predictable challenges now facing our global food system we must recognize that we do not have the luxury to continue to depend on a "think tank" mentality. We must embrace a "do tank" philosophy and get to work creating and building the solutions from the land that lead to abundance and resilience...instead of hesitating and delaying the transformational progress available to all. An Agricultural Renaissance strategically aligned to the UN's Sustainable Development Goals will deliver the abundance and multiple benefits to society, the environment and the economies of the world. Agriculture in all its different forms and sizes must be successful in order for the world to thrive.