

**Guest Speech by Hiroyuki Konuma, Executive Director of GIAPSA Japan at
International Sago Symposium 2023 TOKYO on 7 July 2023 at Gakushikaikan, Tokyo,
Japan**

Professor Ehara, the Chair of the Organizing Committee, distinguished members of the Society of Sago Palm Studies, representatives from FAO, JIRCAS, JICA and various supporting organizations and companies, respected sago scientists from many countries, ladies and gentlemen, good morning.

I wish to express my deep appreciation to the organizers for allowing me speak few words at the occasion of this very important gathering. I am very happy to see many friends here today, who developed their life long research on sago palm. I am also very encouraged to see many young scientists and researchers attending this symposium. Many of leading sago researchers are getting old, we have to make sure the active role of young scientists. Thank you for your participation.

Today, 7th July, Japan celebrates [Tanabata Festival]. It is in our ancient love story, once in a year, the day for long isolated two stars which love each other, allowed to meet by crossing milky Way on the sky. They are given a permission only today to meet and reaffirm their love.

I feel it is like us, all sago lovers, meeting today and reaffirming our continued strong interest and commitment on sago palm. But we should not limit our meetings only once in a year.

As you are aware [sago palm] is called as “food security crop” because of its unique ability to grow on the land where other food crops can not be grown nor grow productively, such as peat soils and wetlands. According to FAO estimates, there are a large size of neglected or under- utilized wetlands in Asia where sago palm can potentially grow, which is estimated as large as the total land size of Japan.

Indeed, sago palm has a high potential to be an important contributor to the food security by bringing extra quantity of starch on the top of existing staple foods without competing land and water resources with other food crops. This benefit should be fully recognized as our

future global food security is very uncertain as the world population and food consumption would continue to grow rapidly towards year 2050 and beyond.

To meet this challenge, FAO predicted that world food production would need to be increased by almost 50 % by 2050 from the level in 2012 to meet such demands, while the available agricultural lands have been almost fully exploited and negative impacts of climate changes to food production are very uncertain at present.

In addition, sago starch has been gaining more and more popularity as a healthy diet thanks to its gluten free characteristics. The large sago green leaves exist all year round would help in keeping wetlands alive and maintain bio-diversity under the trees, and would naturally contribute to absorbing carbon dioxide and hence contribute to reducing greenhouse gas emission. It also helps in supporting poor rural communities in enhancing household food security and facilitate extra income generation from various sago products.

While the role of sago palm in achieving SDGs is very clear among us, there were a little attention and support to sago palm research and development so far.

Despite of this backdrop, I am very pleased today, to see a lot of private sector participation, and their financial support to this symposium.

I hope this academic-public and - private sector collaboration be further promoted and enhanced towards a strong multi-stakeholder support to sago palm research and development.

Finally, I wish to thank the organizers and their supporting staff for excellent preparations for the symposium, and wish to look forward for a successful deliberations and fruitful discussions.

Thank you

