

Introductory Remarks of Dr. Hiram Larew, President-Elect (2007-2008) of the Association for International Agriculture and Rural Development

Welcome to the 44th Annual Meeting of the all-volunteer Association for International Agriculture and Rural Development (AIARD).

There are a number of people and groups to thank for donating their time, good thinking, and in important cases, their financial contributions to making this year's Annual Meeting possible.

AIARD is fairly unique in bringing together - on their own time and outside of their immediate job responsibilities - a diversity of folks from academia, government, private sector and elsewhere who share a common interest in promoting agriculture and rural development at home and abroad. It's survived as an organization for these many years both because of the commitment and energies of many of its members, and because of the enduring importance of that shared interest - an interest in the role that agriculture and rural development play in promoting American and international well being.

This year, we've set our sites on a topic that, I believe, speaks pretty broadly across many interests. It focuses on a tool, fairly new in its offerings, that has as many uses as we can dream of, and that has a simple rationale. Private-public partnerships are all about the fundamental premise that we can do more working together - even in the face of differing motivations - than we can if we work apart. It acknowledges that each party has strengths and weaknesses to bring to bear, and that through our differences (not in spite of them) we can generate innovations that can better serve international development than has been the case heretofore.

The topic has that much more traction in the face of the world's focus - all at once - on food. There's no better rally than hunger or fear of it to clear the thinking and to cause us to reach across our separated

communities of business, government, academia and the like for solutions.

Just as pertinent are the amazing trends ahead in food production and consumption worldwide. Here's just one quote from the just released FAO/OECD Agricultural Outlook 2007-2018 – “The epicenter of global agriculture will further shift from the OECD towards developing countries. Both consumption and production are growing faster in developing countries for all products except wheat. By 2017, these countries are expected to dominate production and consumption of most commodities, with the exception of coarse grains, cheese, and skim-milk powder.”

I would argue that all of these challenges and opportunities offer reasons why PPPs are timely, because the trends are boggling and require all of our efforts. Of course, PPPs aren't silver bullets – nothing is. But they seem to offer innovations that are needed in the field that are improving - or even saving - people's lives.

We'll first hear from a panel that will provide us with backdrop – what are PPPs, and why should we be devoting this focus time on them? Then, in our second session we'll dig into some terrific examples for lessons learned – both hard lessons and those that led to exciting results. In our final session tomorrow, we'll spend a few minutes of quality time looking ahead – where are PPPs going and are we enabling as needed?

All to say, don't sit back and enjoy, but lean forward and engage. I want this to be as interactive as possible with lots of time for Q&A. My job has been to offer a chance for us to learn together. Your job is to make the most of it.

So, let's get started.