**FOOD PROCESSING HUB LAUNCH**

**Welcome remarks**

Prof George Cheminingw’a, Dean of Faculty of Agriculture, warmly welcomed the guests for the commission of the Hub noting that it was important to have such initiative to the university.

**A Tour of the food processing Hub**

After the official opening commissioning of the Hub, the invited guests were taken around the hub. There was brief explanation on what happens in the hub at each stage starting from when the raw materials arrive until the final product is produced.

**Brief description of the Food Processing Hub and the partnerships**.

Dr. Jane Ambuko, UoN, briefly described what the food processing hub is and its necessity to the society. In her remarks, she noted that launching of the hub at that time was to target peak season of mangoes that is almost approaching. She also added that the hub will provide a training ground for both students and other willing trainees hence a priority. She emphasized that training will commence with students in the faculty first before embarking on the other trainees. Finally, she welcomed all the invited guests and appreciated them in honoring the invitations.

Prof Bruce, Purdue University, thanked for being invited for commissioning of the hub. He appreciated the Dr. Jane Ambuko and Dr. Catherine kunyanga (UoN) for coming up with the idea of establishing the Food Processing Hub. He also extended his appreciations to Rockefeller Foundation for their financial support in ensuring that the dream (incubation centre) comes to reality. He stated that the Hub will empower the smallholder farmers and traders through the training that will be offered at the hub. Training students and other stakeholders will enable them become great Agri-entrepreneurs. He also encouraged to keep the communication and research and development ongoing so as to boost the incubation to another level. Finally, he concluded that training that will be offered at the hub will enable the farmers to access to credit from the financial institution as they will be equipped with knowledge and technical know-how to operate the processing.

**Remarks from partners and other stakeholders**

Mr. Alloyed Mbogo, Chairman Karurumo Self-Help horticultural Farmers Group, appreciated the step taken by the University of Nairobi in realization of the farmers and students’ dreams through the set-up of this training centre. It will enable them in gathering information and skills necessary for their betterment. Despite the fact that, the hub starts with the processing of mangoes, there are more fruits that can been integrated into the operation of the hub. He thanked Dr. Jane for her move in ensuring that farmers benefit from this great ideas, for the case of Karurumo and Masii. He also exclaimed that the University of Nairobi has done great to farmers through the dissemination of the information gathered at research level instead of keeping them into the library.

Mrs. Mukami, representative Association of Kenya Mango Traders (AKMT), stated that she impressive in seeing such technologies coming up and the university being at the fore-front in ensuring that people get trained about the processing of mangoes to reduce its loss. She proclaimed that most traders lose a lot of mangoes since they don’t not have alternatives such as processing into finished products e.g. mango crisps, juice, pulp, leather among others. The training centre will help the traders in loss reduction while maximizing profit.

Mr. Edwin, representative –Azuri Health Ltd, thanked the university for coming up with the initiative this will ensure production of healthy products thus safety adhered to. He said that the company is ready to partner with university and are looking forward for that.

Mr. Joshua Oluyali, representative – ministry of agriculture, stated that the ministry has been working closely with the University of Nairobi. SMEs processing facilities will create jobs to the youths after getting such amicable training from the hub that has been just launched. How to utilize the idle resources has been our priority and finally the approach is here with us through trainings. Ministry is discouraging household processing for commercial purposes to be certain of food safety. He encouraged dissemination of technologies to relevant stakeholders.

Dr. Lusike Wasilwa, KALRO, jovially appreciated the work done by Dr. Jane in ensuring success. She said that through the training that the hub will provide to Agri-entrepreneurs will help the country to be food secure by reducing food loss while increasing safety. She was hopeful that more and more will be done by the university.

FPEAK representative, Mr Rikki Agudah said that it is important for the farmers to get information regarding the requirements needed to export products. This can be achieved through the interns and attaché that the organization recruits. He also stated that FPEAK is ready to partner with the university in ensuring success.

Prof. Hutchinson, chair department of plant science and crop protection, said that there have been transformation in the university that is bringing out more important projects that will help the youths. She also added that, the university is heading somewhere that it will see more of the graduates being absorbed into industries well equipped.

Dr. Abong, Chairman Department of food science, nutrition and technology, thanked donors who have ensured that we have reached this far. It will be good for the hub to strive and optimize making it sustainable. Production of the quality products will be our priority.

Prof. Mburu, chairman department of agricultural economics, urged that the issue of market should be addressed so as to ensure the products produced can easily be marketed.

Prof Chemining’wa, dean faculty of agriculture, stated that capacity building is the most appropriate item to be initiated. He also said that there are expectations from the university that industries will be coming to support students for the innovations made. Commercialization of products will support the university. Students will be encouraged as the hub will equip them with skills of processing fruits.

Mr. Amos Kisilu, Rockefeller, said that the launch of the hub has paved way for trainings. Reduction of food losses has been one of their key strategies in ensuring food security nation. There is a need in ensuring that the information reaches the farmers. Supporting the SMEs will enable them deliver the nutritious food.

Prof Rose Nyikal, Chief Guest- principal CAVs, in her remarks said that the hub will enhance the handling of seasonality and perishability of agricultural products. There will be a need to have prescription of food to be consumed by every individual. There is a need to nurture the SMEs for their sustainability despite it being risk. Handling of liquidity, solvency and profitability should be taken care off so as to realize the goals.