

3rd International and 17th National Crop Science Congress of Iran

Jan. 25 – 27, 2022

Shahid-Bahonar University of Kerman, Kerman, Iran

“Knowledge-based, Smart Agriculture and Contract Farming”

Mrs. Joanna Kane-Potaka

Assistant Director General - External Relations, ICRISAT and Executive Director, Smart Food
Global Coordinator

Speech Topic: The Critical Need to Diversify Staples

Abstract:

Climate change and human nutrition/health are arguably the biggest current threats to humanity. It is well recognized that we need more diversity in our diets and more diversity on farm to help with these major pressures. Given that staples across Asia and Africa are typically 70% of the plate, if we focus on diversifying staples this is how we can make a “big impact”. However, to ensure we have a positive impact, we can’t diversify with any food - it should be with food that fits the smart food criteria of being good for you (nutritious and healthy), good for the planet (environmentally sustainable) and good for the farmer (climate smart and viable).

We recognize that the biggest hurdle to achieving diversifying staples is the “Food System Divide”, where the largest investments for decades have been in the Big 3 – rice, wheat and maize. This has included government support, private industry investment, R&D, product development and even development aid. We need to learn lessons from the successes of the Big 3 and apply them in an appropriate way. As a result, we see the need to focus on just a couple of smart foods and have dedicated efforts to develop their value chains as major commodities and food, to diversify staples. There is an urgent need to start at the consumer end and change views and create a buzz and excitement and desire around new staples to drive demand. This requires industry, government and researchers alike to play a key role.

Joanna Kane-Potaka

Assistant Director General, External Relations

International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT) - a CGIAR research center

Executive Director, Smart Food

Supporting food that is good for you, the planet and the farmer.

www.linkedin.com/in/jkanepotaka/

Email: j.kane-potaka@cgiar.org and joanna.kanepotaka@outlook.com