

FOREWORD

THOMAS R. ODHIAMBO

The International Centre of Insect Physiology and Ecology (ICIPE) P.O. Box 30772, Nairobi, Kenya

During the past several decades, agricultural technology has been making significant and rapid advances resulting in increased productivity of various crops in most parts of the world. However, the impact of such new technologies has been limited in Africa, where agricultural production has not been able to keep pace with the increasing demand of food for the growing population in the urban and modern sector.

Among the various major factors that have been responsible for such a shortfall in the availability of food in Africa has been the vulnerability of crops to pests and diseases, both at the pre- and post-harvest stages. In fact, the introduction of high yielding varieties and other improved agricultural practices, particularly in developing tropical countries throughout the world, has often been paralleled by an increased level of pests and diseases. This in turn has put a high priority on the management of these constraining factors. However, for this management to be cost effective, it is necessary to have an idea about the magnitude of losses and the factors governing these.

Unfortunately, most available reports on the losses suffered by different crops due to various pests and diseases, are based on approximations. Experimental assessments of such losses are relatively few, mainly because of lack of appropriate methodology.

In view of the above, the Study Workshop on On-Farm and Post-Harvest Losses of Cereal Food Crops organised by the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa and the ICIPE was timely. The workshop provided a forum for experts in this area to discuss the merits or shortcomings of various methods for assessment of such losses, and to make recommendations for the estimation of such losses and ways to reduce them in future. The papers presented at this workshop are included in this issue.

It is our hope that this issue will prove useful to researchers and extension officers in the assessment and reduction of losses caused by pests and diseases in tropical cereal food crops.