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REPORT OF THE CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Alberto J. Beale, Ph.D.

It has been an honor and a privilege to serve you for the past 11 years, two months and few days as the Chairman of the Board of Directors and Chief Executive Officer of the Society. My term began in San Pedro Sula, Honduras, in July 13, 1996, and runs until the end of this annual meeting on September 22, 2007. In this period, we have held meetings in Puerto Rico (1997), Jamaica (1998), St. Lucia (1999), Dominican Republic (2000), Trinidad and Tobago (2001), Martinique (2002), Grenada (2003), U.S. Virgin Islands (2004), Guadeloupe (2005), Puerto Rico (2006) and Costa Rica (2007). Every year the Society has published the proceedings of our annual meetings. These publications have included three numbers of the Puerto Rico meeting (2006), two of the Guadeloupe meeting (2005), two of the Grenada meeting (2003), and one only from each of the other places mentioned. We also published an index of the articles published in the first twenty proceedings of the Society.

The CFCS continues to be a unique Society in the Greater Caribbean Basin. We bring together members of the agricultural sector from the Spanish-, English-, French- and Dutch-speaking sectors. At every annual meeting that we have held, we have provided six way simultaneous interpretation (Spanish-English, English-Spanish, Spanish-French, French-Spanish, English-French, and French-English). Providing the simultaneous interpretation at the eleven annual meetings, without passing on costs to CFCS members in their registration fees, has been a challenge that we have faced each year.

I have been fortunate to enjoy the support of a few institutions and programs in the past eleven years: the College of Agricultural Sciences of the Mayagüez Campus and the Office of the President of the University of Puerto Rico, the Cooperative State Research Extension and Education Center of the United States Department of Agriculture (CSRRES/USDA), the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA), and the Tropical/Subtropical Agricultural Research (TSTAR) Program of the CSREES/USDA through the Universities of Florida, Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands.

Organizing the 43rd Annual Meeting of the CFCS during the past 18 months has been a challenging experience. During this period, I traveled five times to Costa Rica. An Inter-Institutional Organizing Committee was established. It included the following institutions:

- ❖ Escuela Agrícola de la Región Tropical Húmeda (EARTH)
- ❖ Colegio de Ingenieros Agrónomos de Costa Rica (CIACR)
- ❖ Instituto Interamericano de Cooperación para la Agricultura (IICA)
- ❖ Universidad de Costa Rica (UCR)
- ❖ Instituto Tecnológico de Costa Rica (ITCR)
- ❖ Servicio Fitosanitario del Estado del Ministerio de Producción
- ❖ Universidad de Puerto Rico

During the planning of the event, funding for the TSTAR Program was cut by the U.S. Congress; therefore, the CFCS did not receive any direct funding from TSTAR this year. The funds from CTA that funded the travel of CARDI scientists was not approved, thus reducing the participation of CARDI scientists at this meeting. We received financial support from two main external sources: IICA and the Special Grants Program of CSREES/USDA.

I wish to recognize a few persons who have consistently and persistently worked with me in the organization of this event:

- ❖ Ing. Agr. Cristóbal Montoya
- ❖ Ing. Agr. Claudio Gamboa
- ❖ Mrs. Leda Ávila
- ❖ Dr. Milton Villarreal
- ❖ Dr. Héctor Medrano
- ❖ Ing. Agr. Benny García
- ❖ Ing. Agr. Melissa Ugaldá

and more recently Ms. Maritza Noguera

They are the persons responsible for the success of this event.

As I conclude my term as CFCS Chairman, I wish to express my gratitude to each of the members of the Board of Directors and members of the Advisory Board for working with me during the past eleven years. I hope that in the future our Society will continue to bring together members of the agriculture sector of all the language groups in the Greater Caribbean Basin.

Thank you for having allowed me to serve you.