



**15th AFA International Annual Fertilizers Forum
& Exhibition**

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Speech

**Dr. Shafik Ashkar
Secretary General**

In the Name of God, Most Gracious, Most Merciful

Your Excellency Mr. Amin Abaza

Minister of Agriculture and Land Reclamation

Sponsor of the 15th AFA International Annual Fertilizers Forum

Your Excellencies,

AFA Board Members,

Chairmen of Arab and International Companies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Honorable gathering,

- Good morning everyone. At the outset allow me to welcome the Conference sponsor and express my appreciation for His Excellency's sponsorship to such International event, emphasizing the Egyptian government keenness upon and attention paid to fertilizer industry.
- Our international annual event is regularly held in Cairo, the capital of the cherished land of Egypt, the cradle of civilization, on this same date, to over-emphasize, with no doubts, the firm relationships between fertilizers' producers in the Arab region and their counterparts from other parts of the world.
Such relationships are reflected in the attendance of the chairmen of international organizations and institutions concerned with fertilizer industry and trade.

- Thus, AFA always look for this annual gathering, to re-communicate with friends and participants, from other events convened in the past years, whom we appreciate their attendance and keenness on participating.
- Holding such a conference, this year, is of special nature in the light of the rapid and consecutive challenges in all sectors, including the fertilizer sector, which plays a strategic role in economic development via using natural resources, providing job opportunities, increasing agricultural productivity and insuring food availability.
- With reference to all of the aforementioned issues besides the increase of Arab fertilizer share in international fertilizer production, the abundance of main nourishing materials of fertilizer industry and the expansion of production capacities and geographical locations between continents, hence, the participation of more than 600 attendants representing 50 countries equally from Arab and international companies and institutions comes in line with AFA goals and ongoing approach of coordinating and cooperating with related international companies and institutions.
- Furthermore, its important to highlight the several challenges facing our world today, at the top of which the financial crisis that became a severe economic one, the natural disasters, the increase in poverty the unemployment problems, decrease of rainfall, drought occurrence

in many countries and the rise of world population to reach about 7 billion people, with an annual increase of about 900 thousand.

- In addition, the world is witnessing waves of consecutive immigration of villagers already working in farming to or near cities, these waves are accompanied and resulted by deep-rooted economic and social changes, especially in China and India, and an increase in the middle class category, change in food matrix and rise in food demand.

Such factors resulted in a decrease in international production of agricultural food crops, reduction of international market supply and widening poverty and hunger gap internationally, especially in the third world countries.

- This reality will lead to fierce rivalry on water uses between industrial needs, agricultural and potable water ones, bearing in mind the suffering of many countries from the shortage in rainfall levels and water scarcity, particularly in the Arab region, which is considered one of the poorest regions, in relation to water, and the one expected to face more drought in future.
- The former challenges to mankind require from the international community to set clear policies and take well-planned procedures to deal with the serious shortage in food through depending on agricultural policies and integrated system in order to produce strategic food crops and rationalize water uses.

This is to be carried out via the best management of agriculture and fertilization in order to improve agricultural productivity, utilize used and unused lands, develop agricultural investment atmosphere and provide the best conditions to attract and encourage investments.

- As for fertilizer industry, despite of the current situation of slow consumption and cautious observation of buyers and consumers, awaiting for the clarity and stability of agricultural products prices levels, restoring confidence in financial/ banking sector and provision of financial facilitations to buyers and farmers to buy fertilizers, we do consider that such slow down pace is a short-termed one. Therefore, fertilizer market and trade activity will recover gradually, a matter that we currently realize; as one cannot separate between the rapid need to produce more food and combating the increasing poverty and hunger, without using more fertilizers, which will keep playing a key role as ever to future agriculture development, food security and poverty reduction.
- By recognizing all of the previously mentioned points, AFA was keen to invite a galaxy of experts and regional and international participants to talk about the international financial and economic crisis parallel to agricultural development requirements, increasing population growth, changing climate impact on food and mankind future besides considering seriously the international efforts exerted to bridge poverty gap and advancing in such a direction, an issue led by FAO.

- I would further like to seize the opportunity to express, on behalf of AFA secretariat, all appreciation and gratitude to fertilizer companies chairmen in Egypt for their continuous and strenuous support to AFA, with a special attention to Egypt fertilizer industry successful and promising track led by a distinguished elites of fertilizer industry pioneers.

All thanks

- At the end, allow me, in your name, to welcome the guests, speakers and experts, wishing the 3-day gathering to be full of rich interventions and discussions clarifying the current condition and emphasizing the promising future for fertilizer industry and its strategic role.

Thank You.

Dr. Shafik Ashkar
AFA Secretary General