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Foreword and acknowledgements

It is a great honour and privilege for me to have been invited as a guest professor and to spend ten months at the Geobotanical Institute of the ETH in the beautiful city of Zurich, Switzerland.

After eight years coordinating work in the field of natural resources and environmental studies in China, I received this unusual opportunity to pause and freshen up my knowledge in a quiet environment and to exchange knowledge with experienced colleagues in the field of ecology and forestry studies.

I would like to take this opportunity to express my sincere thanks to Prof. E. Landolt for his kind invitation and generous support in my work and for his great interest in participating in my lectures during my stay at the ETH. I also wish to thank him for his strong encouragement in preparing this paper and for providing me with the necessary conditions. Without his support and encouragement this paper would not have been completed.

My special gratitude goes also to Prof. F. Klötzli. He went to great efforts in arranging my visit. I wish this book to symbolize our friendship and mutual interest in ecological studies. I will never forget the efficient scientific assistant and administrative support given by Dr. Regula Müller, Mrs Susy Dreyer, Mr René Graf, Mrs Anita Hegi and many others.

I wish to extend my thanks to Mrs April Siegwolf, who has spent so much time for editing my poor English draft, and Mrs Anny Honegger for the layout. Last but not the least, I should like to express my great appreciation to Mrs Monika Adam for assisting me in the field work in the Swiss forests, in typing and in drawing some of the figures by computer.

Integrated farming is an old practice in many countries of the world. In recent years, many scientists in China as well as abroad have expressed increasingly great interest in this system and have been engaged in its further development. They have made significant progress. Unfortunately, very little information from China is so far available to the scientists and practitioners working in this field. This paper is intended to give a general overview of the integrated farming systems which have been successfully practiced in China. Due to the limitation of time and the constraints of my personal speciality, I should not expect too much for this paper at this stage. I should be very satisfied if this paper lays down a framework for the further improvement and supplement of more up-dated information.

It is my sincere hope that the integrated farming system should be a contribution in approaching the ultimate goal of sustainable development in rural areas in general, and in developing countries in particular.