



SCON
2022-23

Annual Report

scon-india.org



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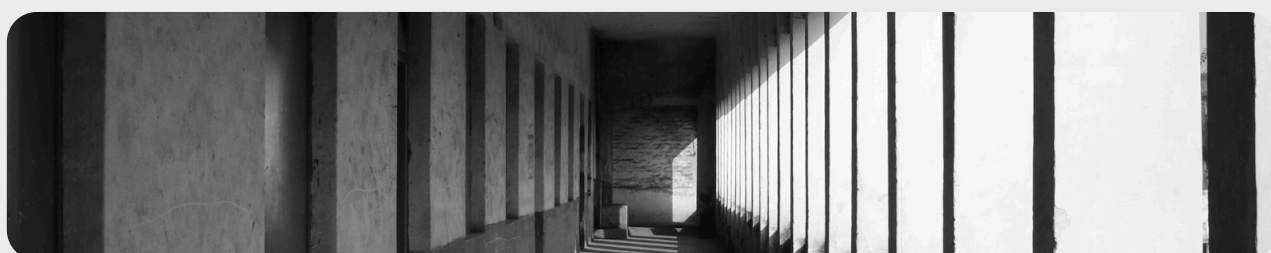
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Foreword



N. Raghuram
President, SCON

Driving Environmental Leadership for a Sustainable Future

It is our distinct privilege to present the Annual Report of the Society for Conservation of Nature (SCON) for the year 2022-23. Over the past year, SCON has actively catalyzed impactful dialogues and action on sustainable development by fostering strategic engagements across national civil society, the Government of India, the United Nations, and international partners. Our core focus remains bridging the gap between emerging scientific evidence and policy implementation, particularly in the critical domain of sustainable nitrogen and nutrient management.

Awareness and engagement with the national civil society

1. In order to promote ethical practices in science and policy, Prof. Raghuram delivered an invited lecture on Research and Publishing Ethics in Plant biology at the 43rd Annual Meeting of Plant Tissue Culture Association (India) & International Symposium on advances in plant biotechnology and nutritional security, 28-30 Apr, NASC Complex, Pusa, New Delhi. He also cochaired a session on Emerging Threats in Indian Agriculture, Biopiracy, IPR issues.
2. To spread public awareness on sustainability transition, Prof. Raghuram delivered an invited lecture on 'Sustainable nitrogen management for sustainable agriculture and industry: Emerging science, technology & policy landscape' at the AIPSN Conference, 6-9 Jun, 2022 in Bhopal. It was attended by a diverse range of people across the country involved with the science-society interface.
3. As a part of SCON's wider engagement with industry stakeholders on nitrogen/nutrients, Prof. Raghuram delivered a presentation on the topic 'From sustainable nitrogen management to nutrient management for sustainable development: Opportunities for global environmental leadership', at a corporate webinar organized by the Gurugram office of the US firm Jacob Engineering on 29 Jul, 2022.
4. Continuing SCON's public engagement on science-led policy development with various civil society stakeholders, Prof. Raghuram delivered a presentation at a seminar organized by the Jawaharlal Nehru Teachers Association on 03 Nov., at JNU, New Delhi on the topic 'Science in the era of Sustainable Development Goals: Challenges and Opportunities'. He emphasized the role of civil society in overcoming disciplinary, institutional and ideological barriers to bring the fruits of scientific research to inform governance and to help the society in its transition towards sustainable development.
5. Prof. Raghuram delivered a presentation on the 'Roadmap for sustainable self-reliance in Indian agri: Restore legume-based rotations, link up green white and blue revolutions with grey revolution' at the DSF-AIPSN National Convention on self-reliance held during 12-13 Nov at New Delhi. This has triggered discussions on the sustainable options of crop diversification and their interface with science, policy and civil society.

Science-led environmental action with Govt of India

1. Prof. Raghuram attended a Stakeholder Meet on 07 Nov on 'Nutrient management of wastewater to prevent eutrophication in Delhi'. The event was organized at GGSIP University in hybrid mode and was chaired by its Vice Chancellor, Padmashri Prof. Mahesh Verma. It was attended by many of its faculty members from multiple schools and from TERI University, UNEP officials including GPNM/GWWI personnel, representatives from the Delhi Jal Board and its STPs, Delhi Pollution Control Board, Union Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change, among others. The presentations were followed by a panel discussion and the event was well received by all the stakeholders. The meet highlighted the opportunities for synergies between sustainable water management and nutrient management in view of Delhi's laudable expansion of sewage treatment capacities in recent years.

2. In a formal engagement with the Govt of India, SCON office bearers Prof. Raghuram and Prof. Adhya attended the 3rd meeting of the prestigious high level inter-ministerial National Nitrogen Steering Committee held at NCSCM, Chennai. This meeting made major progress on many fronts, including the decision to build synergies with the UNEP Working Group on Nitrogen, accepting the National Nitrogen Policy Report prepared by Prof. Adhya, Prof. Raghuram and others under the SANH Project, endorsing India's hosting of the 9th International Nitrogen Conference of INI in New Delhi, Revisiting Fertilizer Recommendations based on evidence from crop trials and supporting the establishment of Centre of Excellence at GGSIPU, New Delhi, and identification of Nodal agencies for each key sector for nitrogen management in India.

3. Prof. Raghuram had a meeting followed by lunch with Dr. Tessa Goverse from UNEP at its India office in New Delhi on 16 Mar 2023. They identified synergies between UNEP and India in view of the Indian leadership in GPNM, Nitrogen Working Group to build on the India-led UN resolution (UNEA 4/14) on sustainable nitrogen management. Some parts of this meeting were also attended online by Prof. Purvaja Ramachandran and the Delhi staff of UNEP. This led to a meeting organized by Atul Bagai, the India head of UNEP with Prof. Raghuram and Shri NPS Gangwar of the MoEFCC, to brief him on the Indian regional and global leadership initiatives on nitrogen and the potential to use the N2024 conference for furthering these initiatives.

Scientific/policy engagement abroad

1. SCON office bearers attended several online meetings of the South Asia Nitrogen Hub with South Asian and UK partners during 17-27 May 2022. Dr. Arti Bhatia, Prof. Adhya and Prof. Raghuram led some of the discussions.
2. SCON members contributed their expertise for the development of policy brief on "Synthetic Nitrogen in South Asia" through online SANH meetings held on 17th May 2022 and 10th June 2022. The idea of this brief was to assess the patterns of production, consumption, import and export of different nitrogenous fertilizers (Urea/DAP) used in South Asia over a longer period of time i.e., 1960 to 2019 to promote sustainable synthetic N management in the region. The brief is complete and ready for publication after final refinements.
3. Profs. Adhya attended the 2nd Sub-Regional Workshop on 'South Asia Nitrogen Framework Policy' during 20-22 June, 2022 in Dhaka, Bangladesh. Prof. Raghuram joined it online and presented on 'Sustainable nitrogen management in South Asia: Emerging science, technology & policy landscape. A joint SACEP-SANH regional report titled "Nitrogen Pollution in South Asia: Scientific Evidence, Current Initiatives and Policy Landscape" was also released during this event.
4. Prof. Raghuram attended an online meeting with UNEP GPNM-GWWI partners on 1st July 2022 and discussed opportunities for nutrient recovery/recycling from wastewater in India.
5. Prof. Raghuram completed his term as the Chair of the International Nitrogen Initiative (INI) from Jan 2019 and handed over the Charge to David Kanter of New York University in July 2022. Despite the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic affecting many INI activities, he championed the India-led Sustainable Nitrogen Management resolution (UNEA4/14), regional nitrogen assessments as a part of the International Nitrogen Assessment under the GEF-UNEP-INI-project towards International Nitrogen Management System. He expanded INI with a regional office in Oceania and rotated the unrepresented countries as regional heads of INI in North America, Latin America, South Asia, East Asia and West Europe, enhanced women scientists' role as Directors/Deputies, steered the 8th INI conference and its Berlin Declaration hosted by the German govt and its Environment agency. He continues as the Chair Emeritus in the Steering Committee of INI for 3 more years.

Scientific/policy engagement abroad

6. Prof. Tapan Adhya demitted office as the Regional Director of INI in South Asia, but continues to engage with the South Asian and international partners through South Asian Nitrogen Hub and INMS. His tenure contributed to the expansion of the INI footprint and activities and in carrying forward the SCON's historic role Indian N Assessment to the SIT's role in South Asian and Global Nitrogen Assessments. This expanded our engagement with South Asian research partners as well as regional intergovernmental coordination through SACEP, despite handing over the activities of the South Asian Nitrogen Centre, originally set up under SCON, to the Sustainable India Trust.

7. As a part of SCON's engagement with scientific stakeholders, Profs. Raghuram and Tapan Adhya attended the XXI International Nitrogen Workshop between 24-28 Oct. in Madrid, Spain. Prof. Raghuram delivered a Keynote lecture on his research regarding 'Crop improvement for nitrogen use efficiency'. Prof. Adhya made an oral presentation entitled 'Reactive-N in South Asia – Strategies for Sustainability and Reducing Waste'. A major outcome of this trip was that India could win the bid for the 9th International Nitrogen Conference of the INI. Another important outcome was to facilitate the scientific cooperation between Indian and Romanian governments to work together as co-chairs of the UNEP Working Group on Nitrogen, which was eventually announced by UNEP in early 2023. SCON is proud that its office bearers contributed their bit to the Indian global environmental leadership on nitrogen through UNEP.

8. SCON office bearers Prof. Raghuram, Dr. Arti Bhatia and Prof. Adhya participated in the annual SANH workshop at Male', Maldives, during 27 Nov to 02 Dec 2022. They exchanged scientific findings and strengthened our research partnerships with colleagues across South Asia. Further, the event also provided opportunity for discussions on regional intergovernmental coordination on nitrogen with the DG and officials of SACEP, apart from the Indian representatives deputed by the MoEFCC. More importantly, this event provided an opportunity to present the Prof. YP Abrol Memorial Awards for excellence in sustainable nitrogen management.

9. As a part of SCON's international engagement on Indian behalf, Prof. Raghuram represented the Indian civil society as a long-standing member of the GPNM Steering Committee, in a meeting chaired by Prof. Ramesh Ramachandran from NCSCM, Chennai. UNEP through GPNM enabled the governments to take charge of the newly constituted Working Group on Nitrogen to implement the UNEP resolutions on Sustainable Nitrogen Management, paving the way for India and Romania to lead it as its Co-Chairs.

Publications

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