



PERA e-AGRI NEWSLETTER

FACULTY OF AGRICULTURE - UNIVERSITY OF PERADENIYA

SERVICE EXCELLENCE, LEADERSHIP, COLLABORATION, ADAPTABILITY AND INNOVATION

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NEWSLETTER

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Events

Grand Finale - Diamond Jubilee Celebrations of the Faculty of Agriculture

The Faculty of Agriculture of the University of Peradeniya, the premier Faculty of Agriculture, commemorated the glorious years of its unwavering dedication to agricultural higher education and allied fields in Sri Lanka in 2023. The Faculty had a series of events planned throughout the year in celebration of 75 years of higher education in agriculture in the Universities of Sri Lanka under the tagline “A Diamond Thus Far and Beyond”. The grand finale of the Diamond Jubilee Celebrations was held on 20th December 2023 at the Waters Edge, Battaramulla. The main part of the event consisted of the felicitation of different stakeholder agencies in appreciation for being our partners over the years. Around 450 participants took part in the event. Prof. M.D. Lamawansa (Vice-Chancellor, University of Peradeniya), Prof. S.S. Kodithuwakku (Dean, Faculty of Agriculture), and Mr. H. Amarasekera (Chairman, CIC Holdings PLC) spoke at the occasion. The sponsor of the Grand Finale was CIC Holdings PLC. Prof. B. Marambe coordinated the final event with the help of the organizing committee.



Annual Conference of South Asian Nitrogen Hub – 2023

The South Asian Nitrogen Hub (SANH) annual conference - 2023 was held at the Faculty of Agriculture, University of Peradeniya during 2nd to 6th October 2023. Around 136 foreign participants from over 12 countries attended the meeting. After the inauguration session, a cultural show was staged by the undergraduate students of the Faculty, which also included a fashion show. Each country had updated their progress and current status in their SANH research works in plenary and parallel sessions. Apart from the research outcome and knowledge sharing, several training programs were conducted during the conference. Further, participants joined the field visit to the District Agriculture Training Centre, Galpalama, Nuwara Eliya, and an interactive session was taken place with local farmers and school students. “Nitropulse”, an all-island competition series related to the sustainable nitrogen management was conducted parallel to the conference. School children and university undergraduates were invited for these competitions and their submissions were displayed during the event. Prof. S.P. Nissanka of the Department of Crop Science, Faculty of Agriculture was the overall coordinator of the conference.



Scientia All-island Interschool Quiz Competition

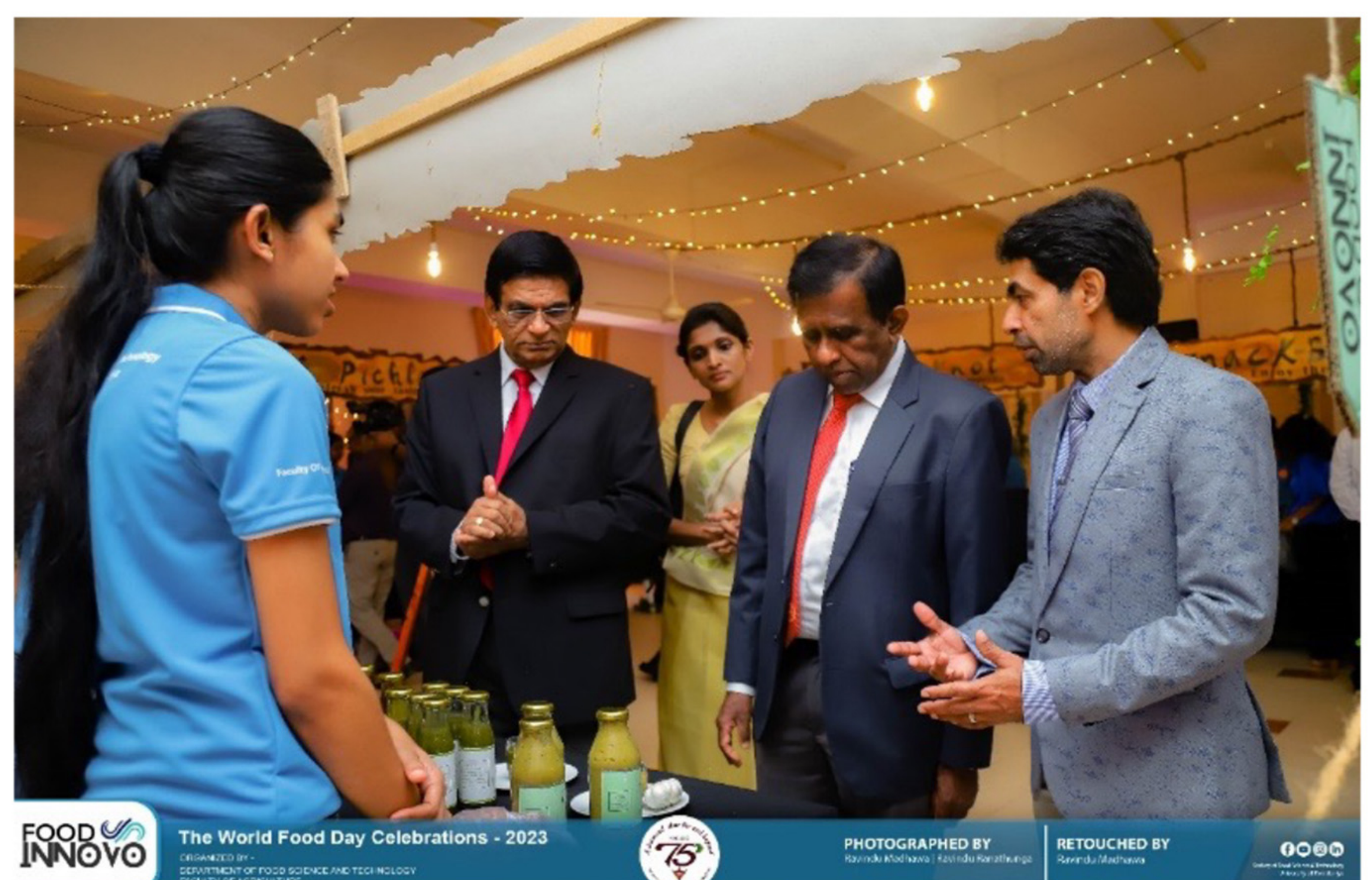
The Faculty organized “Scientia All-island Inter-School Quiz Competition” targeting to popularize biological sciences among the school students, popularize the academic programs offered by the Faculty, and attract the best talents to the Faculty. This is a long-term investment made to build the capacity of the youth in Sri Lanka, increasing their engagement in agriculture and allied sectors in the future. The quiz competition was organized with the approval of the Ministry of Education and the support of Provincial Departments of Education in all nine provinces of the country. Altogether 219 schools participated the quiz competition representing all 25 districts of the country. The main sponsor of the Scientia quiz competition was A. Baur & Co. Pvt. Ltd. The provincial and inter-provincial rounds and the closing ceremony of the quiz competition were successfully held on 27th October 2023 at the Faculty of Agriculture. The final battle among the winners of the inter-provincial rounds was also held during the closing ceremony. From the final battle, D.S. Senanayake College-Colombo won the all-island championship while Dharmaraja College-Kandy and Viharamahadevi Girls School-Badulla secured the second and third places, respectively. The closing ceremony was graced by Prof. M.D. Lamawansa (Vice-Chancellor, University of Peradeniya), Mr. R. Blaser (CEO of A. Baur & Company Pvt. Ltd.), Mr. J. Gunasekara (Managing Director of A. Baur & Company Pvt. Ltd.), Prof. S.S. Kodituwakku (Dean, Faculty of Agriculture) and many other dignitaries including Deans of other Faculties, Directors of Postgraduate institutes and Heads of the Departments. Nearly 200 participants attended the closing ceremony. Prof. W.S. Dandeniya of the Faculty coordinated the quiz competition with the support of the organizing committee.



Celebration of World Food Day

The Department of Food Science and Technology organized two events to commemorate the World Food Day on 16th October 2023 to reveal the long services of the Department & the Faculty to the food sector in Sri Lanka. At the inauguration session, the contribution of the Faculty to higher education in food science & technology was highlighted inviting 125 school students and teachers in the advanced level biology stream and appreciating 35 stakeholders from the food industry, research institutes, and government line agencies who directly supported food science education of the Faculty for a long period. Prof. R. Senaratne (Chairman of the National Science Foundation of Sri Lanka) attended as the chief guest. Emeritus Professor U. Samarajeewa and Mr. N. Perera (Chief Executive Officer, CMC Engineering Export GmbH) addressed the gathering as invited speakers. Vidyarthi College-Kandy and Girls' High School-Kandy were awarded as the winners and the runners-up respectively, of an inter-school quiz completion conducted by the students' Society of Food Science & Technology of the Faculty, to popularize food science education among school students. Over 300 participants attended the inauguration event.

The food fiesta named FoodInnovo was ceremonially opened by Prof. R. Senaratne, Prof. M.D. Lamawansa (Vice-Chancellor of the University of Peradeniya) and Dr. N.U. Jayawardana (Acting Dean of the Faculty). At the food fiesta, food products developed by the undergraduates were exhibited and sold in eleven food stalls dedicated to different food categories. The final event of a cooking competition conducted among eleven teams of undergraduates of the Faculty was also held at the food fiesta. The efforts of the students and the staff were highly appreciated by many invitees and visitors who attended the event. Prof. B.E.P. Mendis served as the coordinator of the program and Prof. R.P.N.P. Rajapakse, Mr. P.C. Arampath, Dr. E.R.J. Samarakoon, and Dr. D.M.S.S. Daundasekara organized the major activities of the event.



Celebration of World Soil Day

The Department of Soil Science, jointly with Soil Science Society of Faculty of Agriculture celebrated the World Soil Day by conducting an awareness program “Healthy Soil for Secure Tomorrow” for school students and farmers. The purpose of the event was to initiate a valuable program for undergraduates of the Faculty to engage with the Joint effort of Food & Agriculture Organization (FAO) and Provincial Agriculture Department in implementing Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) program in vegetable farmers in Upcountry of Sri Lanka. In the future, undergraduate students will play a crucial role in monitoring changes in soil quality among GAP farmers and providing scientific insights related to GAP practices introduced. Furthermore, they will have the invaluable opportunity to identify research and innovation needs at the field level and address them through their final year research projects. Mr. T. Bandara from Central Environmental Authority, Mr. G. Weerasuriya from FAO, and Mrs. M.C.N. Sadamalie from the Provincial Agriculture Department took part in the event which was held on 5th December 2023 at the Faculty.



Establishment of Retired Academic Consortium

The Faculty Board of Agriculture took an initiative to establish a consortium of retired/past academic staff members of the Faculty. The consortium was established based on the goal of honouring retired and past academics and creating opportunities to exchange and share the knowledge and experience of distinguished academic members. The launching of the consortium was celebrated together with the launching of the book “Water Management and Soil Conservation” written by three distinguished past academics of the Faculty; Prof. K.G.A. Gunasekara, Prof. E.R.N. Gunawardena and Dr. A. Kandaih. The event was held on 5th October 2023 at the Department of Agricultural Economics & Business Management Auditorium. Professor M.D. Lamawansa (Vice-Chancellor of University of Peradeniya) and numerous past distinguished academics of the Faculty graced the event as Special Guests. Many academic and non-academic staff members of the Faculty attended the event as invitees. The event was coordinated by Dr. D.M.S.S. Daundasekara.



Achievements/Awards

President's Awards for Scientific Research

Prof. H.M.V.G. Herath and Prof. W.A.U. Vitharana received "President's Awards for Scientific Research" for publication years 2019 and 2020. The award recognizes a distinguished piece of Sri Lankan research and bestowing awards from the President of Sri Lanka, as a national honor to efforts of the scientists in the country. The awarding ceremony was held on the 21st November 2023 at the Sirimavo Bandaranaike Memorial Exposition Centre of the BMICH.



Fellow of the National Academy of Sciences of Sri Lanka

Prof. D.K.N.G. Pushpakumara was honored as the "Fellow of the National Academy of Sciences of Sri Lanka" at the 44th Annual General Meeting of the National Academy of Sciences of Sri Lanka that was held on 16th September 2023.



Appointments

Prof. S.A.C.N. Perera has been appointed as the Head of the Department of Agricultural Biology for a period of three years with effect from 21st November 2023.



Outreach

Schools-University Partnership Initiative

A practical training program was conducted for ten schools of Zonal Education Office - Ibbagamuwa on 23rd November 2023. Around 150 Advanced Level students of agriculture stream participated in the program. Practical training sessions were conducted on tissue culture techniques for plant propagation, determination of milk quality parameters, examination of poultry and cattle digestive systems, and preservation of fruit juices using pasteurization. Academic staff members and academic supportive staff members from different Departments of the Faculty served as resource persons.



Training Sessions for Advanced Level Biology Students

In parallel to the Diamond Jubilee Celebration of the Faculty and the 20th Anniversary Celebration of the Agricultural Biotechnology Centre (AgBC), the AgBC organized free theory and practical sessions for Advance Level (A/L) Biology students Island-wide with the approval of the Ministry of Education. The training sessions were offered free of charge with volunteered service of the AgBC staff and the leftover supplies from the research grants. The programme includes the contents from Unit 02 (Nucleic Acids) and Unit 07 (Molecular Biology and Recombinant DNA Technology) of the A/L Biology syllabus. The inaugural session was held on 25th September 2023, with the participation of the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Peradeniya, the Dean of the Faculty of Agriculture, the Director of Science, Ministry of Education, Heads of the Departments, Directors of the Centres, and the Chairperson of the Diamond Jubilee Committee. The theory sessions were conducted online by Prof. P.C.G. Bandaranayake on the 25th and 26th of September and the 4th and 9th of October 2023. All the videos are available on AgBC's YouTube channel.



Training Program for Advanced Level Teachers

As one of the activities of the Diamond Jubilee Celebrations, the Faculty organized a series of two-day residential teacher training workshops on Molecular Biology and Recombinant DNA technology, across all nine provinces of Sri Lanka from August to November 2023. The program was a collaborative effort between the Ministry of Education and the generous sponsorship of Ceylon Biscuits Limited. Three hundred and fifty teachers from the nine provinces were trained under this program. The academic staff members of the Department of Agricultural Biology and the Agricultural Biotechnology Centre served as resource persons to deliver interactive lectures and guide the participants through practical sessions. Certificate awarding and closing ceremony of the program was held on 22nd November 2023.



Student Activities/Achievements

Research Awards

The students of the Faculty secured the "Best Research award" under the theme of "Higher Legal Education and Environmental Development" of South Asian Conference on Higher Legal Education and Sustainable Development – 2023 which was held from 27-29th October 2023 at Horizon Campus in Colombo. The title of the winning research is "Navigating Sustainable Seas – Reinventing Fisheries Legislation for Thriving South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) Marine Industry: A study focusing on the Marine Industry of Sri Lanka". The members of the winning team include U.K.M.H.D.E. Munasinghe (AG/17/106), R.N. Fransis (AG/17/046), and W.K.N. Sandupama (AG/18/ASF/032). Participants from eight SAARC countries including Sri Lanka attended the conference.



Alumni Corner

Annual Cricket Match and Get-together of the Alumni Association

The annual cricket match and get-together of Alumni Association, Faculty of Agriculture, University of Peradeniya (AAFAUP) was held on 2nd September 2023 at ground premises of In-Service Training Institute-Gannoruwa. This event, a beloved tradition, brought together alumni from various backgrounds, enriching our tight-knit community. Attendees enjoyed a variety of activities, making this year's event particularly memorable. The event also provided opportunities for final year students to fostering connections and networking with Alumni of the Faculty.

