



NEWSLETTER

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Editorial

I am greatly honored to write an editorial for BRITAE's sixth volume 2023. As a member of the partner in the BRITAE project, it allows me to share my knowledge, experience, and contribution towards the area of building resilience in tropical agroecosystems. My editorial is mainly focusing on the "International Conference on Building Resilience in Tropical Agroecosystems 2023" (ICBRITAE 2023). I am pleased to inform you that ICBRITAE 2023 was held on March 15th-16th, 2023 in Colombo, Sri Lanka with great enthusiasm and support from the national and international partners of the BRITAE project. The conference focused on the resilience of contemporary agricultural ecosystems and was conducted as a hybrid event garnering worldwide attention.

Building resilience in tropical agroecosystems is therefore an urgent challenge, that requires the integration of scientific, social, and cultural knowledge to design and implement sustainable and adaptive management practices. Therefore, ICBRITAE 2023 covered various themes related to the resilience of tropical agroecosystems, such as ecological and social resilience, climate change and resilience, pests and diseases and resilience,

socio-economic and cultural resilience and monitoring and evaluation of resilience.

Thus, the conference aimed to bring together scientists, practitioners, policymakers, and stakeholders from different disciplines and regions to share their experiences, insights, and challenges in addressing the resilience of tropical agroecosystems. The ICBRITAE 2023 Proceedings are a valuable repository of knowledge from esteemed scientists, policymakers, planners, technologists, and thinkers on the topic of building resilience in tropical agroecosystems.

I express my gratitude to our Chief Guest, Keynote Speakers, Session Chairs, and all authors for their valuable contributions and collaborative efforts in compiling the ICBRITAE 2023 proceedings. In conclusion, the ICBRITAE 2023 was an important initiative that addresses a critical challenge facing global food systems and sustainable development. We hope that ICBRITAE 2023 will contribute to building a more resilient, equitable, and sustainable world for all.

Professor Nishara Fernando
University of Colombo

International Conference on Building Resilience in Tropical Agroecosystems 2023

THE INAUGURATION

The International Conference on Building Resilience in Tropical Agroecosystems 2023 (ICBRITAE 2023) was successfully completed with the immense support and coordination of consortium members, non-consortium members, invitees and participants. **Mr. Lars BREDAL**, Deputy Head of the EU delegation was the Chief Guest of the event. The Guest of Honor was Senior Professor Sampath Amaratunga, Chairman of the University Grants Commission, Sri Lanka. ICBRITAE 2023 took place in the span of two day, namely 15th and 16th of March 2023, at the Galle Face Hotel, Colombo, Sri Lanka. ICBRITAE commenced with an inauguration ceremony held on 15th March 2023 from 8.00 am onwards. After the registration of participants, the traditional oil lamp was lit by consortium members and invitees, followed by a beautiful Kandyan style welcome dance performed by the SWAY dancing team. Professor Nishara Fernando delivered the welcome address as a co-chair of ICBRITAE 2023 while Senior Professor Champa M. Nawaratne briefly explained the purpose and the outcomes of the BRITAE project as its coordinator. Subsequently, Speeches were delivered by Vice Chancellors of two Sri Lankan universities, namely, Senior Professor Sujeewa Amarasena from the University of Ruhuna, and Senior Professor Sudantha Liyanage from the University of Sri Jayawardenapura (USJ).

Three keynote speeches were delivered on the first day of the conference; first, by **Professor Mark Howden**, who is an Honorary Professor at Melbourne University. He is a Director of the ANU Institute for Climate, Energy and Disaster Solutions, a Vice Chair of the Intergovernmental

Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), the Chair of the ACT Climate Change Council and contributes to several major national and international science and policy advisory bodies. His speech titled "Adapting Tropical Agroecosystems to Climate Change", consisted a clear outline about the core drivers of climate change continuity, robustness and system adaptation of tropical agroecosystems to climate change. The Second keynote speech was delivered by **Professor Ayon Chakraborty**, who is an Associate Professor in Project Management from the Institute of Innovation, Science, and Sustainability at Federation University, Ballarat, Australia. Professor Chakraborty explained about circular economy adaptation in small and medium enterprises in Australia and concluded that energy and resource efficiency measures show limited applicability of renewable energy sources though there is growing focus on conservation of water resources and emission reduction at present.

Finally, **Senior Professor H.D.Karunaratne**, Vice Chancellor of University of Colombo (UOC) delivered a speech on "Agricultural sector productivity and farmer's literacy in Sri Lanka," focusing on the strength of information collection and the importance of information for production levels in the agricultural sector of Sri Lanka.

The second day of the conference consisted of four keynote speeches. The first by **Professor Arturas Kaklauskas**, the Chair of the Construction Management and Real Estate Department of the Vilnius Gediminas Technical University and a member of the Research Council of Lithuania. Professor Kaklauskas emphasized on the application of ground-breaking technologies in students' education by briefly explaining the

way Web Text Mining automatically detects real-time opinions about the learning process expressed in blogs, online forums, social media channels, comments, ideas, notices, surveys etc. He explained that the application of Web Text Mining is important to understand and monitor students' opinions, thoughts, sentiments, attitudes, emotions, and preferences which in turn allows stakeholders to make superior decisions.

The second speech was made by **Mr. Bandula Wickramaachchi**, a Technical Specialist of the Asian Disaster Preparedness Center and Former Secretary to the Ministry of Primary Industries and Social Welfare, Sri Lanka. He described the impact of sustainable and resilient agroecosystems, and agro-technology on drought and flood water management tools and protocols by specifically using a resilient value chain approach to explain resilient agroecosystems.

Thirdly, **Dr. Didier Lesueur (Phd)** delivered his keynote speech on the importance of soil health for sustaining soil biodiversity and enhancing crop yield in tropical agroecosystems. As a Senior Soil Microbiologist at CIRAD, UMR Eco&Sols, Montpellier, France and as an Adjunct Associate Professor at Deakin University, Melbourne, Australia, he emphasized on agroecology and soil health and explained the relationship between soil organisms, agroecosystems, and the common microbial biotechnology platform. Finally, **Professor. Dr. Siegfried G. Zuern**, as the Director of the International Centre and Graduate School and Professor of Operations Management at Esslingen University of Applied Sciences, Germany, gave an insightful keynote speech as he expressed his views on "Systems Thinking Simulation Modeling" of the 17 SDGs as a basis for CSR reporting: He emphasized this idea with an example of a large international fruits and vegetables company, explaining the importance of CSR reports and its relationship with food supply chain. He highlighted the relationship between the food supply chain

and the sustainable development goals of the United Nations.

The final event of the agenda was the vote of thanks, delivered by Dr. Rumesh Liyanage, who is the coordinator of the University of Sri Jayawardanapura. The inauguration ceremony came to a successful conclusion with the support of all local and international partners of the BRITAE project.

Technical Sessions

ICBRITAE 2023 was based on 8 themes, namely, agroecosystems and biodiversity conservation, ecosystem management and socio-ecological resilience, green infrastructure and urban resilience, indigenous knowledge, precision agriculture and agricultural productivity, global food safety and security, disasters and agricultural vulnerability, life cycle assessment and circular economy, agricultural policies, concepts and strategies.

The conference themes covered aspects of both natural science and social science. The abstracts were sent to selected field experts for review and each abstract was reviewed by two reviewers. Reviewers were appointed by consortium members of the project, and each followed a rigorous review process to select abstracts that were suitable to be presented at the conference. 101 abstracts were selected out of more than 150 which were received. Nine presentations were made at the first session, co-chaired by Senior Professor K.L.Wasantha and Professor Emlyn Witt. The second session was co-chaired by Professor Nishara Fernando and Senior Professor Champa Navaratne and consisted of eleven presentations. The third session was co-chaired by Professor Ranjith Dissanayake and Professor Lalith Rajapakse consisting of three presentations. Session four had



a total of fifteen presentations and was co-chaired by Emeritus Professor K.D.N. Weerasinghe and Professor Arturas Kaklauskas. Session five, consisting of nine presentations, was co-chaired by Professor S.B. Navaratne and Dr. R.P. Godawatte Liyanage. The sixth session had seven presentations co-chaired by Professor Dilanthi Amaratunga and Professor Richard Haigh. Professor Champika Liyanage and Professor Irene Lill co-chaired session seven, consisting of nine presentations, and the final session was co-chaired by Professor Achini de Silva and by Professor Mohamed Esham and had a total of four presentations.

Both virtual and physical poster presentation methods were used at ICBRITAE 2023. There were twenty-seven physical presentations and seven virtual presentations, all conducted on the second day of ICBRITAE 2023. All presenters including junior researchers, academics, and intellectuals actively participated throughout the technical sessions of ICBRITAE 2023. Local and international intellectuals shared their knowledge and comments with young researchers who presented their findings at the conference, thus allowing them to expand and develop their scope and research skills for the future.

Training Workshop on the Britae MSC Program and Orientation for the Students' Online Platform

Professor S.B.Nawarathne, Dr. Rumesh Liyanage, and his team worked together to organize a training workshop for the BRITAE MSc. program on the 17th of March 2023. Two European Universities namely, the University of Central Lancashire and the University of Huddersfield in the United Kingdom, and all other local partner universities participated in the training workshop. The inaugural session started at 8.30 am at the faculty guest house of the Faculty of Technology (FOT), University of Sri Jayewardenepura (USJ), Sri Lanka.

Professor Nilmini Liyanage, Dean of FOT, USJ, delivered the welcome speech. This training workshop had two sessions which mainly focused on the course module development techniques of European Universities and the third session was considered a networking session followed by dinner and karaoke.

Senior Professor Champa Nawarathne gave a clear introduction to the MSc. program of the BRITAE project while Professor S.B.Nawarathne delivered the vote of thanks to all who supported the BRITAE project both directly and indirectly. Professor Champika Liyanage and Dr. Sarita Robinson from the University of Central Lancashire, United

Kingdom conducted an interesting discussion about "Feedback, Marking and Plagiarism" in the first session, explaining the importance of referencing and the disadvantages of plagiarism. In addition, the topic "Building Resilience and Nutrition" was explained by Professor Nicola Lowe from the University of Central Lancashire in the United Kingdom. Mr. Thisara G. Perera from the University of Huddersfield spoke about "Agricultural Resilience and Technological Innovations". The second session began at 1.00 pm with the topic "Generative AI-Chat GPT" by Dr. Sarita Robinson. Later, Dr. Ruchira Yapa introduced the Vevox app which can be used to make polls to improve students' engagement in studies. The audience was actively involved in this session by participating in a few quizzes through Vevox. Finally, Dr. Rumesh Liyanage, from the University of Sri Jayewardenepura explained the student enrolment platform to the audience, including the student enrolment method, basic criteria for enrolment, use of the BRITAE website details as study materials, and the SAR center. At the end of the session, both local and international partners joined for a session of karaoke. Thus, the third day concluded with great support and engagement.

PICTURES OF DAY 1 (15.05.2023)



The Main Hall, Galle Face Hotel



The Registration Table



BRITAE project consortium members with invitees



Mr. Lars BREDAL, Deputy Head of EU Delegation

PICTURES OF DAY 2 (16.05.2023)



Professor Arturas Kaklauskas delivering his keynote speech



Eng. Bandula Wickramaracchi delivering the keynote speech



Session chairs of the BRITAE project chairing the poster presentation



Professor Guittila Y. Jayasinghe conducting the awarding ceremony

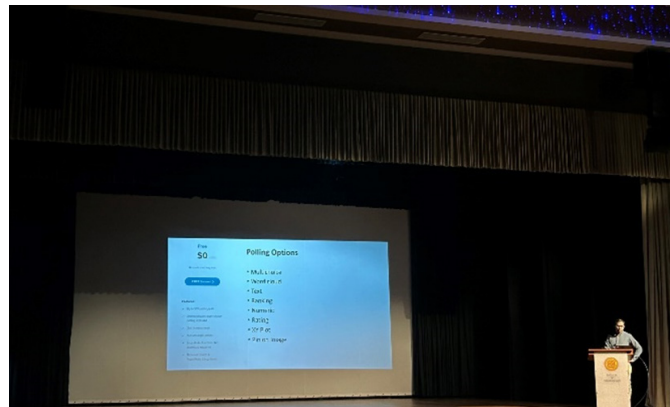
PICTURES OF DAY 3 (17.05.2023)



Auditorium, Faculty of Technology, University of Sri Jayewardenepura



Vote of Thanks by Prof. S.B Nawarathne, Coordinator-BRITAE, USJ



Speech by Dr. Ruchira Yapa, University of Central Lancashire, UK introducing Vevox - A polling tool to improve student engagement through Vevox,



Speech by Mr. Thisara G. Perera University of Huddersfield, UK, Agriculture resilience and technological Innovations, University of Central Lancashire, UK



Speech by; Prof. Nicola Lowe, Building Resilience and Nutrition, University of Central Lancashire, UK