



ICIMOD MOUNTAIN CHAIR 2019–2021

Jyoti Prakash Tamang

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Jyoti Prakash Tamang is a pioneering food microbiologist. His work centres on the interpretation of ethno-microbiology to metataxonomics and metagenomics associated with fermented foods and beverages prepared and consumed by different ethnic peoples of the Himalayan region of India, Nepal, and Bhutan. He studies a wide range of subjects – from microbiome diversity and food safety to nutrition and probiotics – and has published several books and more than 155 research papers.

Tamang was born in Darjeeling, India. He completed his PhD in microbiology from the University of North Bengal, India, in 1992; post-doctorate research in molecular microbiology from the National Food Research Institute, Japan, through the United Nations University–Kirin Fellowship in 1995; and another post-doctorate research from the Institute of Toxicology and Environmental Hygiene, Germany, in 2002 through the Volkswagen Foundation Fellowship.

Tamang has received several prestigious awards such as the United Nations Association of University Women Award in 1996; National Bio-Science Award of the Department of Biotechnology, Ministry of Science and Technology, Government of India, in 2005; and Gourmand World Cookbook Award in 2010. He has been a fellow of

the National Academy of Agricultural Sciences, India, since 2013; Indian Academy of Microbiological Sciences since 2010; and Biotech Research Society of India since 2006.

J P Tamang has been teaching microbiology and biological sciences for 33 years and supervised several doctoral and post-doctoral students. At Sikkim University, he has served as the officiating Vice Chancellor during 2017–18 and is presently Dean of the School of Life Sciences and Professor of Microbiology, Department of Microbiology.

Commissioned by ICIMOD, the Mountain Chair is an honorary title conferred upon a prominent scholar working on mountain issues in the Hindu Kush Himalaya. The Mountain Chair promotes the vision and mission of the Himalayan University Consortium (HUC) for enhanced collaboration and dynamic knowledge partnerships among universities in the region for resilient mountain development. The Mountain Chair also serves as an HUC and ICIMOD Ambassador within and outside the region.

Work plan

During his tenure as ICIMOD Mountain Chair, J P Tamang will visit three Himalayan University Consortium (HUC) members in Bhutan, China, and Myanmar to conduct research on ethnic foods and promote regional collaboration for research on mountain issues.

Royal University of Bhutan

Tamang intends to study Bhutan's major ethnic fermented foods at Sikkim University. He will supervise selected MSc or PhD students and young faculty members from the Royal University of Bhutan, teaching them modern food microbiology and bioinformatics. He will also train them on writing research proposals and adopting sound research methodology.

Southwest Minzu University, China

J P Tamang will profile the diverse microbiome community, including both culturable and unculturable micro-organisms associated with ethnic fermented soybean foods of Southern provinces of China. With assistance from PhD students of Southwest Minzu University, he will document ethnic products and native skills involved in the production of these foods. The team will analyse collected samples in the advanced laboratory at Sikkim University and jointly publish findings. He will also assist the Southwest Minzu University faculty to design a syllabus or curriculum on micro-organisms, food, and nutrition.

University of Mandalay, Myanmar

Pe-poke is a popular sticky, fermented soybean food in Myanmar, similar to *aakhone* in Nagaland and *hawaijar* in Manipur, India. With a team of selected PhD students or faculty members from the University of Mandalay, Tamang plans to extensively study this under-researched food's microbial community, nutritional value, health benefits, and predictive functionality. His research will aim to standardize its traditional preparation technology for sustainable income generation. Findings will be published and integrated into the university's curriculum.

HUC mandate

The Mountain Chair will also take lead in amplifying HUC regional and global impacts:

- Provide inputs for the development of relevant HUC Thematic Working Groups and Task Forces
- Expand the HUC network by engaging new full and associate members or initiating MoUs between ICIMOD and higher education and think tank institutions within and outside of the HKH
- Co-convene the inception meeting of the Himalayan Food and Nutritional Security Thematic Working Group, in coordination with the HUC Secretariat and HUC participating members



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