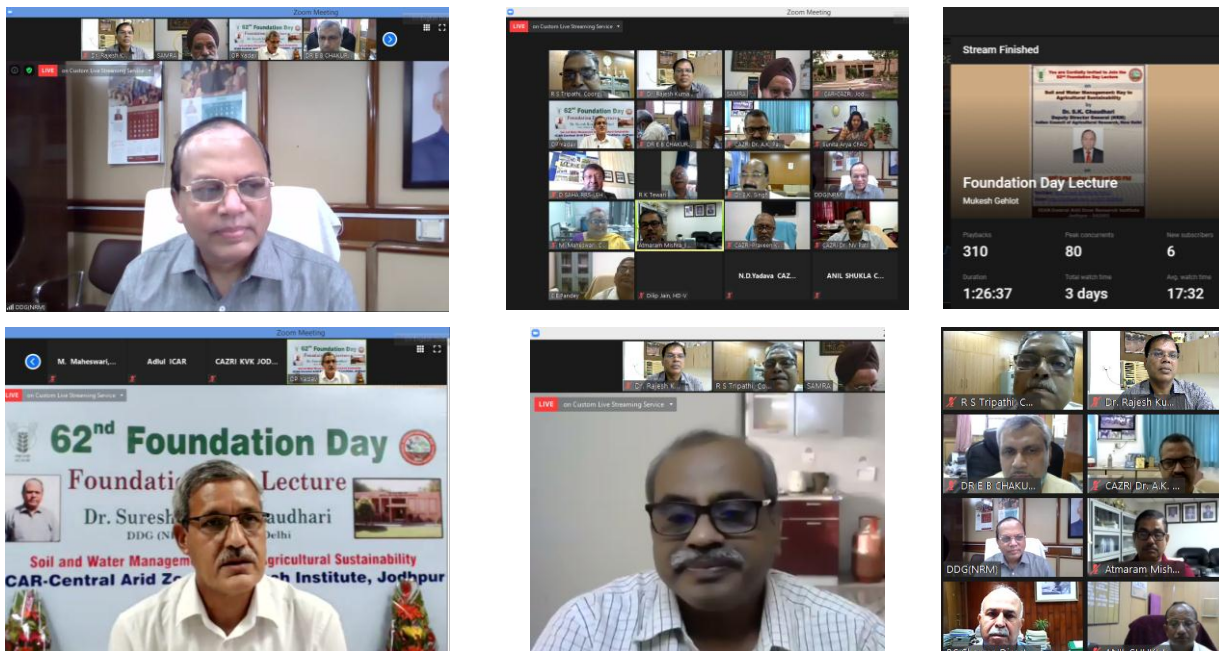


Dr. S.K. Chaudhari, DDG (NRM), ICAR delivers CAZRI 62nd Foundation Day Lecture

The ICAR-CAZRI Foundation Day Lecture was delivered by Dr. S.K. Chaudhari, DDG (NRM), ICAR, New Delhi on 30 September, 2020 on 'Soil and Water Management: Key to Agricultural Sustainability' as part of the 62nd Foundation Day Celebrations of the Central Arid Zone Research Institute, Jodhpur which happens to be on 1 October. Dr. J.S. Samra, former DDG (NRM) & former Chairman of RAC, ICAR-CAZRI; Dr. S. Bhaskar, ADG (NRM), ICAR, New Delhi; VCs of SAUs and Directors of ICAR institutes; past and present Heads of Divisions and RRSs, scientists and other staff of CAZRI participated in the programme.

Dr. Chaudhari covered various aspects related to Soil and Water Management. He emphasized the importance of environmental sustainability, major factors affecting it as well as the options available to promote it. He reminded the viewers about India's commitment to Sustainable Development Goals. He elaborated the role of policy decisions in nutrient consumption and their implications in terms of soil fertility, multi-nutrient deficiency, soil microbial diversity and soil health. The importance of managing soil biodiversity to improve soil productivity and maintain ecosystem services was also highlighted. He addressed the issue of soil pollution due to presence of toxic pollutants such as heavy metals, pesticides, antibiotics, plastic waste, etc. He also raised concerns on expansion of desertification in pockets of peninsular India. Problem of secondary salinization due to non-judicious use of good quality canal water or irrigation with poor quality groundwater was underlined along with some examples of its successful management in IGNP command area in Rajasthan as well as in some canal irrigated areas of Haryana.



Dr Chaudhari highlighted the gap between fertilizer demand and supply in India, resulting in import of fertilizers worth Rs. 80-90 thousand crores; and very wide regional disparities in fertilizer consumption as a result of which about 82% fertilizer is consumed by only 15% of districts in India. He showed concerns about low fertilizer and water use efficiencies in India and suggested that water use efficiency can be enhanced substantially through large scale adoption of technologies like laser leveling, raised beds, mulching, zero tillage, micro-irrigation, etc. He highlighted the role of policy support in technology spread such as increase in area coverage under micro-irrigation after launch of *Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchae Yojana*. Dr. Chaudhari expressed the need of following a comprehensive ecological approach to maintain soil health and water quality, synergy with global programmes supported by sound soil, water and fertilizer management policies.

The lecture was much appreciated by the audience for its wide and in-depth coverage of various aspects related to soil and water management for sustainable agriculture. Earlier, Dr. O.P. Yadav, Director welcomed Dr. Chaudhari and other dignitaries. Dr. R.S. Tripathi, organizer of the CAZRI Foundation Day Celebrations 2020, presented formal vote of thanks and expressed his heartfelt gratitude to Dr. Chaudhari for highlighting very critical and comprehensive issues related to soil and water management.