



## **J-WAFS 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Remarks**

**Professor Rohit Karnik, Director of J-WAFS**

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We just saw a snapshot of the amazing work that J-WAFS faculty, students, and researchers are pursuing to address humanity's need for water and food. The talks illustrate the breadth of research that J-WAFS supports – ranging from industry to community, from fundamental science to application, and bringing to bear a wide range of disciplines spanning all five schools and college

As I stand here, I feel that it is such a privilege to be a part of the MIT community, and it is an honor to have been selected to serve as the next director of J-WAFS. My own experience with J-WAFS dates back a decade. I was awarded a collaborative seed grant by J-WAFS in spring 2015 on water quality monitoring. The funding enabled me to pursue collaborative research in an area that was new to me. Through visits to small and large water quality labs, I learned about water quality monitoring and its challenges in India. Later, we established collaboration in India, and it led to our collaborators starting a company with the goal of improving access to water quality. Another J-WAFS Solutions grant allowed me to collaborate with D-Lab on developing affordable filters from waste wood, which is currently in the process of being commercialized. More recent funding aimed at the detection of foodborne pathogens and sensors for chemical contaminants in water. J-WAFS support was thus instrumental in helping me to pursue research in food and water, to establish new collaborations, to engage in fieldwork and gain a better understanding of the problems faced by many communities, and to contribute to addressing the challenges in water and food in a way that I found deeply meaningful.

Before taking on the role as director, I served as associate director of J-WAFS and came to appreciate how well J-WAFS was organized. It attests to John and Renee's vision and acumen, as well as the dedicated J-WAFS staff – Carolyn, Emily, Greg, Nicholas, and Longy. A member of the J-WAFS director search committee mentioned to me that “J-WAFS is such a gem,” and after having seen J-WAFS as a grantee and as associate director, I could not have agreed more with that statement.

Analogies are not perfect, but please allow me to use one. What makes J-WAFS a gem is you, the J-WAFS community – members of the MIT research community who care about the challenges of water and food, along with friends and supporters of J-WAFS. Like a jeweler who cuts and polishes the gemstone to bring out its brilliance, you – the J-WAFS research community – are the gemstone, and the J-WAFS program helps MIT researchers and students to focus their talents on the important challenges associated with water and food.

So, today's 10<sup>th</sup> year anniversary celebration is really a celebration of the J-WAFS community and its achievements and impact. I would like to express my gratitude to all of you for being here today as we celebrate this 10-year milestone. I would like to thank students, researchers, faculty members for the many roles you have played – from submitting proposals and doing research to serving as reviewers or committee members. Visitors, collaborators, and advisors to J-WAFS, including the FACT Alliance, MIT's leadership, past and present. Different offices and DLCs across MIT for support and collaboration. J-WAFS staff, John and Renee for their remarkable leadership over the past decade. All our friends and supporters who believe in our mission, many of whom have supported J-WAFS through gifts large and small. And to Mohammed Jameel, for his generosity and vision that led to the founding of J-WAFS, Fady and Hassan Jameel, and colleagues at Community Jameel and ALJ who have supported and continue to support J-WAFS.

We are at a pivotal juncture in history where rapid advances in technology are opening new possibilities yet securing humanity's most basic resources – water and food – remain a challenge for many and with climate change and environmental degradation this challenge is only growing in magnitude. So, the mission of J-WAFS: “to catalyze MIT research, innovation, and technology for ensuring safe and resilient supplies of water and food while reducing

environmental impact to meet the local and global needs of a rapidly expanding and evolving population on a changing planet,” is more important than ever.

And today’s celebration is evidence that we can make a difference. As we look ahead to the next 10 years of J-WAFS, let us all make a promise to ourselves – that we will strive to seek to better understand food/water systems, to identify challenges and opportunities, to talk to colleagues, brainstorm, collaborate, to apply our creativity and ingenuity, to provide support in whatever way that best suits us, and thus, to participate in shaping the future of food and water systems, and in developing solutions to secure humankind’s vital resources.

The J-WAFS team is here to provide support in this endeavor. I personally believe that the mission of J-WAFS is an extremely worthy and meaningful one, and, given the fundamental importance of water and food, an apt exemplification of the part of MIT’s mission to “advance knowledge and educate students in science, technology, and other areas of scholarship that will best serve the nation and the world in the 21st century.” And so, I invite everyone to join together in advancing our mission.

The J-WAFS 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration also coincides with John and Renee’s upcoming retirements this summer. J-WAFS has been shaped and has flourished under their excellent leadership. And so today we also celebrate their retirements and their decade of service to J-WAFS. We had reached out to the MIT community on the occasion of their retirements for messages and wishes. Many of you present here responded. We received an outpouring of messages, which shows how much impact John and Renee have had. The messages have been compiled and printed into message books – one for John and one for Renee. John and Renee, we would like to present these books to you as a small token of our appreciation. These books carry our wishes, and we hope that the books evoke fond memories of your time at J-WAFS in the future. Thank you for a decade of exemplary service to J-WAFS! We will certainly miss you! Congratulations on your well-deserved retirement! And our best wishes for a joyful next chapter in life!