**Success stories of nitrogen across two decades of international conferences**

**Jan Willem Erisman**1,2, Enrico Dammers2, James N. Galloway3, Allison M. Leach5, Albert Bleeker4

1 Louis Bolk Institute, Hoofdstraat 24, 3972 LA, The Netherlands

2 VU Amsterdam, The Netherlands

3 Environmental Sciences Department, University of Virginia, Charlottesville VA 22904 USA.  
4 PBL Netherlands Environment Assessment Agency, Antonie van Leeuwenhoeklaan 9, 3721MA Bilthoven, The Netherlands

5 Department of Natural Resources and The Sustainability Institute, University of New Hampshire, Durham NH 03824 USA

# Abstract

The first International Nitrogen Conference was held in 1998 in the Netherlands. It was recognized then that nitrogen had grown from a local hotspot problem to an international and even global problem. The main focus of the conference was on scientific developments identifying the major issues related to the human influence on the nitrogen cycle and the potential options to deal with it. At the second Nitrogen Conference it was decided to initiate the International Nitrogen Initiative, and seven focus regions or continents were identified. Now, 18 years after the first conference in the Netherlands, the International Nitrogen Conference has been organized in and by all these seven regions, Oceania being the last in 2016. During these 18 years many developments have taken place and progress has been made on our scientific understanding of the different nitrogen issues, on the assessment of potential indicators and successful measures to address the issue and on the preparation of policies to reduce nitrogen pollution. The N-conferences have played an important role in bringing together the knowledge on the disruption of the N-cycle and its consequences. It has raised awareness in these different regions of the world and for different stakeholders and policy levels. The challenge of mitigation will become larger with increasing effects on climate, human health and ecosystem services. N2016 will help understand the necessary ways forward to a sustainable nitrogen economy and future conferences will showcase findings, identify new issues, and provide a forum for finding solutions that will benefit society.

**Keywords:** nitrogen, conferences, policy, science, successful reduction