

SIKKIM



The FIRST 100% organic state in the world

by Poonam K Malhotra

The picturesque Himalayan state of Sikkim, located in northeast India, on the border with Bhutan, Tibet, and Nepal, is **World's First Organic State**. All of its farmland is certified organic.

Sikkim won the golden Future Policy Award 2018, conferred by the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO) and IFOAM, for the world's best policies promoting agroecological and sustainable food systems, beating 51 nominated policies from 25 countries.

In 2003, **Chief Minister Pawan Chamling** announced the vision for Sikkim to be India's first organic state. Sikkim became the first state in India to officially announce the adoption of organic farming to ensure long term sustenance of soil fertility, protection of environment and ecology, healthy living and decreasing the risk of health ailments.

The state government showed strong political will and policy coherence, along with well-defined targets and implementation plans. The policy combined mandatory requirements, such as gradually banning chemical fertilizers and pesticides, with support and incentives to build a holistic transformation of the whole Sikkimese food system.

The policy also focused on enhancing soil fertility, preserving water quality and increasing biodiversity at the field and landscape level. Training farmers in how to produce organic inputs such as compost, vermicompost and organic pesticides using local plants.

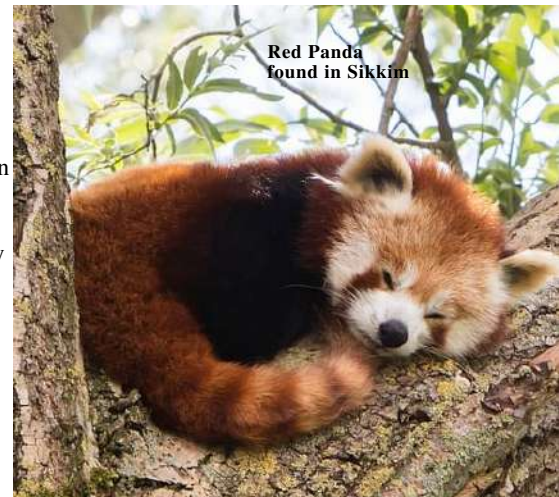
Sikkim thus returned to traditional methods of farming based on inter-connection between humans and nature.

After a 13 year trial, Sikkim is now boasting an increased bee population, butterflies, more wildlife, larger yields and healthy soils. The state is not only preserving its rich biodiversity and fragile ecosystem, it is also showing the world that a small state can lead us into a greener and organic future.

Sikkim's transition to a fully organic state has benefited over 66,000 farmers, reaching beyond just organic production to include socioeconomic aspects such as consumption and market expansion, rural development and sustainable tourism with its comprehensive and inclusive approach. As such, Sikkim is an excellent model for other Indian states and countries worldwide who want to upscale agroecology.

The Sikkim tourism sector also benefitted greatly from the state's transition to 100 per cent organic as the number of tourists increased by over 50 per cent between 2014 and 2017. The transition not only increased the income but also the life expectancy of its entire population. In 2016, Sikkimese people lived ten years longer than in 1990 and the state administration has data showing the connection with healthy organic biodiverse food.

In the past two decades, Sikkim has become a pioneer in sustainable development. **It is a state with many firsts when it comes to green policies.** In 1998, it became the **first Indian**



Red Panda
Found in Sikkim

state to ban disposable plastic bags, it is also among the first to target single-use plastic bottles. *"What happened was that in one episode in the 1990s, plastic carry bags got washed down due to heavy rainstorm. Drains got blocked, which resulted in a huge landslide. Some people died too. This triggered the state government to ban plastic bags,"* said **Rajendra P Gurung, CEO, Ecotourism and Conservation Society of Sikkim (ECOSS)**, a local NGO that works in Sikkim. In 2016, Sikkim took two major decisions. It banned the use of packaged drinking water in government offices and government events. Second, it banned the use of Styrofoam and thermocol disposable plates and cutlery in the entire state in a move to cut down toxic plastic pollution and tackle its ever-increasing garbage problem.

With a population of under seven lakh, the tiny state of Sikkim has been leading a green revolution of its own kind.



In 2015 Sikkim declared itself the first organic state in the world. It is the first time in history that a state set such an ambitious vision and also achieved it. Sikkim Chief Minister played a significant role in converting this vision into reality, he is known as the “Greenest Chief Minister” of India

The state has another distinction—that of Minimum diversion of 800 hectares of forest land for non-forestry purposes in the last 20 years.



Credits: @sikkim.tourism

It is also **India’s first state to achieve 100 per cent sanitation coverage** and the only state that is open defecation free. Urinating in public can cost Rs 500 (\$7.50). The government made it mandatory to have a sanitary toilet at home to be eligible for any benefits from the government or to contest in village-level elections. This has resulted in the success of the programme which was envisaged years before Swachh Bharat Campaign (Clean India Campaign) was even conceptualized. In fact according to the Swachh Survekshan Gramin 2016 report Sikkim has been ranked as India’s cleanest state, based on the sanitation of its rural areas.

Sikkim is also the greenest state in the country. The forest cover based on interpretation of satellite data is 3,359 sq km which is 47.3 per cent of state geographical area as compared to 21 per cent of the national average. The Sikkim government has spent around Rs 10 crore on green mission so far and around 45 lakh indigenous trees, shrubs, herbs, climbers, creepers, conifers and green foliage including fruits and medicinal plants have been planted under the green mission to create a store house of genetic diversity.

Several protection and conservation programmes such as Sikkim green mission, Smriti Vans and Ten Minutes to Earth have been launched by the State. **Under the “Ten Minutes to Earth” mission launched in 2009, 6,10,694 saplings were planted throughout the state in ten minutes, creating a new world plantation record.** This greenery has helped in the sequestration of 1400 tonnes of carbon dioxide annually. Now, every year, on June 25, ten minutes are dedicated to a mass plantation drive.



Credits: @sikkim.tourism

Sikkim is on the road to attaining almost full literacy



Credits: @sikkim.tourism

Credits: @sikkim.tourism

The state even banned firecrackers in 2014 to contain noise and air pollution.



Kanchenjunga peak

Under the “Ten Minutes to Earth” mission launched in 2009, 6,10,694 saplings were planted throughout the state in ten minutes, creating a new world plantation record.

The state is also one of the pioneers in generating renewable energy.

It has a total installed power generation capacity of 674.43 MW. Of the overall installed power generation capacity in the state, thermal power contributes 102.25 MW, while hydropower and renewable power contributes 520 MW and 52.18 MW, respectively.

The state is also considered to be the Kingdom of flowers and is an innovator in cultivating Gladiolus

The state is richly endowed with rare and exotic flora and fauna, which includes 5,000 species of flowering plants, 515 rare orchids, 60 primula species and 36 rhododendron species. Of the 6,000 medicinal plants in India, over 424 plants (including the famous Artemisia vulgaris that is used as an antiseptic) are grown in Sikkim



Valley of flowers, Sikkim

DID YOU KNOW THIS ABOUT SIKKIM?

1

In 1998, Sikkim became the first Indian state to ban disposable plastic bags

2

In 2016, Sikkim banned the use of packaged drinking water in government offices and government events

3

In 2016, it also banned the use of Styrofoam and thermocol disposable plates and cutlery in the entire state

4

It is India's first state to achieve 100 per cent sanitation coverage

5

It is India's only state that is open defecation free.

6

Sikkim has been ranked as India's cleanest state in Swachh Survekshan Gramin 2016 report



7

Sikkim is the greenest state in the country with 47.3% forest cover

8

Sikkim is one of the pioneers in generating renewable energy



Sikkim has several snow-capped peaks including Khangchendzonga National Park, one of the most sustainable tourist destinations in India. A UNESCO World Heritage Site and India's only Mixed Heritage site, this magnificent place is famous for both its cultural and natural heritage and is home to Kanchenjunga peak. Also, a home to red pandas and snow leopards, the park covers around a fourth of Sikkim's area and borders both Nepal and China. Almost half of India's bird species and one-third of the country's flowering plants are found within this park.

Once considered to be one of the poorest states in India with 35 per cent of the people living below the poverty line, Sikkim now stands amongst the top income-generating states with a substantially low level of poverty. The Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP) of Sikkim expanded at a high CAGR of 15.86% between 2015-16 and 2019-20.

Credits: @sikkim.tourism

Sikkim is the only state which offers excise benefits and major players from the pharmaceutical industry have set up their manufacturing units in the state. A few of these are Cipla, Sun Pharma, Zydus Cadila, Alembic, IPCA, Alkem Lab, Intas Pharma, Torrent Pharmaceuticals, and Unichem.

The state attracted Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) equity inflow worth US\$ 5.85 billion during April 2000 and September 2019 according to the data released by the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT).

With a population of under seven lakh, the tiny state of Sikkim has been leading a green revolution of its own kind. Despite being small and isolated, and with its people leading their lives in extremely tough mountainous terrain, Sikkim has emerged as one of India's environmental leaders.

