

Food Requirement, Production, And Population Growth In Nepal: An Overview

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INTRODUCTION

The civilisation came into existence with the starting of agriculture era. After the stone age, people started cultivation and hence made ghettos. They began to live as a social being. The ghettos were built in the bank of river. The periphery of fertile land were used for cultivation. Venn (1933) pointed out that the earliest forms of intensive cultivation, as opposed to extensive, which implied a constant moving on nomadic tribes, was and still in practiced on the alluvial bank of rivers like Nile and Tigris. After this, the process of development began. Countries that had favourable geographical structure, fertile land and developed technologies progressed. They eventually entered and got success in industrial development. But many countries that lacked favourable situation are still struggling for basic requirements of the people.

Nepal is an agrarian country, eighty one percent of total population depend on agricultural activities and the contribution of agriculture sector on GDP is about 40 percent. The agriculture sector contributes more than one half of the household income, and yet it has just US\$ 210 per capita income (HMG/MOF 1997)

For the development of agriculture system in Nepal, many plans and programmes were formed and many operational modalities were experimented, yet the achievements are below the satisfactory level. The major encountering problems are seemed poverty, malnutrition, disease and lack of basic education. Not only Nepal, but about one billion people of South Asia and Africa share these problems (Werblow 1997). Here the living standard of tenant and small farmers remained unchanged for years. The productivity of food crops is terribly low. They have food crisis because of systematised system has not been present. APP (NPC 1997) notably states that agriculture is central to poverty reduction. Only with the growth of agricultural activity, the fruit of development can go to the rural poor, with this reality in mind, APP aims to rise agricultural incomes and makes it as a multiplier of the rural economy and a medium of poverty reduction (NPC 1997)

Nepal basically produces food crops. In 1996/97 the production of food crops was 9.19 million tons. In 1997/98 it is hoped that 9.26 million tons food crop will be produced. The area covered by food crop production was 90.2 percent in 1996/97 and it will be 90 percent in current year (Economic Survey 1997).

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The land distribution system of Nepal is shown in the Table 1.

Table 1
Regionwise Size Of Agricultural Land Owned By Household
(In Percent)

Region	0.5 Hactare	0.5-2.0 Hactare	<2.0 Hactare
Mountain	41.6	44.3	14.1
Hill	45.8	47.6	6.6
Tarai	33.2	47.1	19.7
Nepal	40.1	47.0	12.8

Source : Nepal District Profil 1997, NRA.

The Table 1 gives a clear picture about the area, number of land holdings, number of tenants and number of land owners. It shows land fragmentation and the size of land holding, which are not favourable for agricultural enterprise. The heavy dependence of Nepalese population on agriculture is the result of elevation of zones to cultivated area (Gurung 1998).

Table 2 shows the size of land and agricultural land ownership by household.

Table 2
Size of Land And Agricultural Land Ownrship

Total Area (In Hactare) 4527573	Total Number of Land Holdings 13459660	Total Tenants 421471	Total Land Owners 2323642
Abal Wet Land (First Grade)	Doyam 595249 (Second Grade)	Seem 359865 (Third Grade)	Chahar 97053 (Fourth Grade)
Abal Dry land (First Grade)	Doyam 185385 (Second Grade)	Seem 43922 (Third Grade)	Chahar 484229 (Fourth Grade)
Pachaun (First Grade)4101			
Total Discounted	1664294		
Total Cultivated	2768438		

Source : Nepal District Profile 1997, NRA.

The Table 2 shows that about 47 percent land comes under 2 hectare area per family. This is very disgusting to farm commercially

Table 3
Size Distribution Of Agricultural Land Ownership By Household and Region

Region/Operation	Percent of Total Operated Land		Percent of Total Owner Land	
	Owner operated	Rented in	Owner operated	Rented out
Mountain	89.4	10.6	97.0	3.0
Hill	89.1	10.9	95.9	4.1
Tarai	80.1	19.9	90.0	10.0
Nepal	84.7	15.3	93.2	6.8

Source : Nepal District Profile, 1997 NRA.

The Table 3 shows that the percent of rented land is big in tarai region, and it is small in hill region.

Besides this, Nepal has been a food insecure country. The reasons are low man per agricultural land ratio, skewed land and income distribution, widespread poverty, rapid population growth, poor performance of agricultural sector and the overall employment market and irresponsible political structures. In this situation, food security has been the primary function of the state so that all the people at all times have access to safe and nutritious food to maintain a healthy and active life (FAO, cited in Koirala and Thapa 1997). But this remains a distant dream for the large number of the people.

In Nepal, cereals play a dominant role. Rice, maize, wheat, millet and barley are the major food crops. The recommended minimum caloric requirement for an adult in the country is 2250 kilo calories per person per day. 2140 kilo calories person per day is recommended for adult in tarai, 2340 for hill and 2250 kilo calories for mountain are recommended (NSAC 1998.)

Per capita daily access to nutrition is given in the Tabel 4.

Table 4
Per capita Daily Access To Nutrition

Particulars	1987	1994/95
Energy (kilocal/capital/day)	2000	2138
Protein (grams)	53.29	64.47
Fat (grams)	27.15	32.84

Source : NHDR 1998, NSAC.

In the case of food balance, aggregate food grain production, consumption and balance at the national level reveal declining tendency steadily. The trend value for this variable has been falling by about 1.2 million metric tons between 1974/75 to 1995/96 (Gurung 1998)

CONCLUSION

Slow agricultural growth has created many social economic problems. Majority of rural population earn low income so, the saving and investment opportunities became limited. These are the causes for the non-agricultural sectors to remain low and employment opportunities becoming less with low adoption of new technology, low inputs of manure and fertiliser, irrigation, market and price policy (Koirala and Thapa 1997).

To get rid of these problems, Nepal has to create right political, institutional, social, economical and sectoral conditions for the betterment of the economy, more employment and proper distribution of income (Werblow 1997). For the production of more crop, irrigation system should be developed and to make it cheaper and effective, public investment should be increased than private investment .

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