

NEPAL: A SO-CALLED AGRICULTURAL COUNTRY

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Abstract: This research paper examines the role of agriculture in Nepal's economy, focusing on income generation, employment, food security, and rural development. Agriculture remains a crucial sector, employing 66% of the population and contributing 36% to the GDP. However, subsistence farming practices lead to low productivity. The study highlights the economic importance of agriculture, emphasizing the need for policies to enhance productivity and promote sustainable farming practices. It discusses government interventions for improving food security and nutrition. The paper analyzes agricultural policies, extension services, and integrated rural development projects. By providing insights into the impact of agriculture, the paper underscores the importance of agricultural development for Nepal's economy, food security, and rural livelihoods. Continued efforts are needed to enhance productivity, ensure food security, and foster sustainable farming practices in Nepal.

1) Introduction

1.1) Agriculture in the World

Agriculture is one of the most crucial aspects of economic growth: accounting for 4% of global gross domestic product (GDP), and in some least developing countries, it can account for more than 25% of GDP, according to The World Bank (The World Bank, 2023).

Agricultural development is one of the most powerful tools to end extreme poverty, boost shared prosperity, and feed a projected 9.7 billion people by 2050. Growth in the agriculture sector is two to four times more effective in raising incomes among the poorest compared to other industries. According to popular articles and blogs, the top 10 agricultural-producing countries for the year 2022 are China, the United States of America, Brazil, India, Russia, France, Mexico, Japan, Germany, and Turkey.

Civilization started with agriculture, which remains very important and plays a significant role in our lives. For decades, it's been associated with the Production of food crops. However, the importance of agriculture goes above and beyond farming. It's evolved into forestry, fruit cultivation, beekeeping, arbitrary, mushroom, dairy, etc. Today, the processing, distribution, and marketing of crops and livestock products are all acknowledged as a part of agriculture. Agriculture plays an essential role in sustaining and driving the economy. It's the backbone of everything that goes to us. In addition to providing food and other raw materials, it also provides employment opportunities.

1.2) Agriculture in Nepal

The agriculture sector engages around 66% of the total population in Nepal. It contributes one-third of the nation's GDP with a significant contribution to the national economy. It creates a diverse array of jobs and employment, from farming to small-scale enterprises. Nepal is vulnerable to food insecurity and recurring natural disasters like floods, drought, landslides, earthquakes, diseases, and pest outbreaks. The agriculture sector in the country is still dominated by subsistence farming resulting in low productivity and Production of agricultural commodities.

Agriculture is the major sector of the Nepalese economy. It provides employment opportunities to 66 percent of the total population and contributes about 36 percent to the GDP. Therefore, the development of the agriculture sector is key to the development of the national economy. The ministry bears overall responsibility for the growth and development of the agriculture sector.

Agricultural Production in two different regions of Nepal

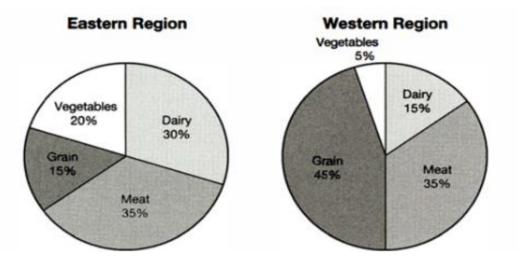


fig: pie - chart showing agricultural production in two different regions of Nepal

2) Literature review:

There are many research studies and findings that demonstrate agriculture in the world and Nepal, the agricultural problem in Nepal, and its effect on Nepal's economy. Globally, about 1 billion people work in the agricultural sector, about 28% of the population employed in 2018 (Emily Cassidy and Amelia Synder, 2019).

Nepal has a majority of people engaged in this sector, i.e., around 66% of the total population of Nepal is engaged in agriculture. It creates a diverse array of jobs and employment, from farming to small-scale enterprises. Nepal is vulnerable to food insecurity and recurring natural disasters like floods, drought, landslides, earthquakes, diseases, and pest outbreaks. The agriculture sector in the country is still dominated by subsistence farming resulting in low productivity and Production of agricultural commodities (The World Bank, 2023).

The major challenges faced by developing and agricultural countries like Nepal. Lack of motivation among rural youths and farmers, environmental degradation, climate change, and sustainability issues, a lack of workers, insufficient facilities, a lack of capacity to use ICTs on the ground, a lack of evaluation of the impact of extension activities on rural farmers, ineffective and weak links between stakeholders at different levels, a low level of farmer education, insufficient budget, and insufficient staff are all highlighted in the paper as problems in public extension systems (Pankaj Raj Dhital, 2017).

For a number of reasons, it has also significantly impacted the livelihoods of Nepalese farmers. Current situation in Nepal, with regard to agriculture is that now Nepal is dependent on food imports since the main food crops there have produced lower yields recently than in other South Asian nations, which is one of the causes of the degradation of Nepal's economy. In recent years, there has been a significant decline in both the size of fields and the amount of land owned by each family. All grain crop yields in the last 30 years have stagnated, and any output advances have been negligible if hill regions are taken into account separately. So, these reasons have played a very significant role in the livelihood of farmers (Bashu Dev Deshar, 2013).

This paper refers to the literature discussing Nepali agriculture, its impact on the country's economy, and the means of subsistence for those who work in the sector. This research uses multiple regression to demonstrate how various changes in agriculture have affected Nepal's economy.

3) Observation

3.1) Impact of Agriculture in Nepal

The impact of agriculture in Nepal is significant as it plays a crucial role in the country's economy, food security, employment, and overall development. Here are some key points on the impact of agriculture in Nepal.

3.1.1) Economy and GDP Contribution

Farming is a huge supporter of Nepal's economy, assuming a pivotal part in business age, pay age, and by and significant monetary turn of events. The farming area in Nepal envelops different sub-areas, including crop development, domesticated animal raising, fisheries, and ranger service. These activities contribute to the nation's GDP and enable a significant portion of the population to earn a living. Nepal's farming area has customarily been a substantial part of its economy, representing a considerable portion of the nation's Gross domestic product. Agriculture has recently contributed about 23.95 % of Nepal's GDP. This commitment has steadily declined as different areas, like administrations and

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assembling, have encountered rapid development. Despite the downward trend, agriculture continues to be an essential component of Nepal's economy. It gives quick and circuitous work and opens doors for a massive piece of the populace, especially in rural regions. Numerous ranchers in Nepal participate in limited-scope cultivating jobs, developing harvests, and raising animals to support their livelihoods. By supporting local businesses, encouraging economic activity, and reducing poverty, the agricultural sector also significantly contributes to rural development.

3.1.2) Food Security and Subsistence Farming

Agriculture plays a critical role in ensuring food security in Nepal. The country's reliance on subsistence farming is a crucial characteristic of its agricultural landscape. Subsistence farming refers to growing crops and raising livestock primarily for personal consumption rather than for sale in the market (The Editors of Encyclopedia Britannica, 2023). In Nepal, a critical piece of the populace relies upon resource cultivation for food needs. Ranchers develop different yields, including rice, maize, wheat, millet, grain, and blended vegetables. They back animals, like cows, bison, goats, and poultry, which provide protein and other fundamental supplements. The government and various development organizations have undertaken efforts to improve agricultural productivity and enhance food security in Nepal. As per the study, families in the provincial region of the nation — where food costs will generally be higher — are bound to be food unreliable than individuals residing in metropolitan areas. These initiatives aim to make it simpler for farmers to acquire cutting-edge farming techniques, high-quality seeds, and agricultural inputs like fertilizers. They likewise mean improving ranchers' information and abilities through agrarian expansion administrations, preparing programs, and scattering best practices.

In addition, it has been acknowledged that increasing the variety of crops is an essential strategy for increasing Nepal's food security. By advancing the development of different yields, ranchers can lessen their weakness to environmental change, vermin, and sicknesses and guarantee a more adjusted and nutritious eating regimen for the populace.

The government of Nepal has also initiated programs to promote the adoption of improved farming practices and technologies. These include the provision of subsidies, credit facilities, and technical support to farmers. Additionally, efforts have been made to strengthen post-harvest management, storage facilities, and market linkages to minimize food losses and improve farmers' income.

3.1.2.1) Current status of food security in Nepal

While food security in Nepal has improved in recent years, 4.6 million people are food-insecure, with 20 percent of households mildly food-insecure, 22 percent moderately food-insecure, and 10 percent severely food-insecure (Ministry of Health, Nepal; New ERA, Nepal ; and The DHS program, ICF, the USA, 2017). Now, Nepal imports billions of foods. In the 1960s, the cereal yield in Nepal was one of the highest among the South Asian nations; the work in Nepal was 198 % higher than in Bangladesh and 212 % higher than in Sri Lanka. But today, the situation has completely reversed. Nepal is comparatively lower than most South Asian neighbors in average rice, wheat, and maize yield (Shrestha, P., 2018). The most severe consequence of food insecurity is malnutrition, which has many health and economic implications. Over the past decades, national surveys have consistently demonstrated high levels of child undernutrition plaguing the country. According to the Food Security Monitoring Unit, Ministry of Agricultural Development, and the World Food Program, Dhading, Gorkha, Kalikot, Mugu, Humla, and Bajura were "highly food insecure." Nepal Food Security Bulletin states that "external assistance" is necessary for providing food and non-food demands. A highly food-insecure population resembles people whose food consumption gaps are higher than usual. These people can only meet the minimum food needs through the "accelerated depletion of livelihood assets." Family size, gender, age, education levels, land ownership, household income, remittance, and improved access to markets and roads seem strongly associated with food security (Regmi, H. R., Joshi, G. R., Sapkota, R. P., & Thapa, S., 2019).

3.1.3) Employment

A labor and employment policy strategy were executed in Nepal in 2006, and the public work act was established in 2017, fully intent on furnishing working-age individuals with practical, non-oppressive, double-dealing free, and sound business. Horticulture is a massive wellspring of work in Nepal, particularly in rural regions where most of the populace dwells. For a significant workforce, farming activities offer opportunities for direct and indirect employment. In Nepal, agribusiness includes essential cultivating exercises, such as crop development and domesticated animal raising, and supports practices like transportation, stockpiling, handling, and promoting rural items. Along the agricultural value chain, these activities create additional employment opportunities. However, despite its significance as a source of employment, Nepal's agricultural sector faces challenges brought on by a lack of mechanization, inadequate infrastructure, and restricted access to cutting-edge farming techniques. Endeavors to address these difficulties and advance feasible horticultural practices are significant for further developing businesses open doors and livelihoods in provincial regions.

3.2) Government Initiatives and Policies

The government of Nepal has implemented various policies and programs to promote agricultural development, enhance productivity, and improve farmers' livelihoods. Initiatives include the provision of subsidies, agricultural extension services, access to credit, irrigation facilities, and the promotion of agricultural research and development. These initiatives aim to promote agricultural development, enhance productivity, improve farmers' livelihoods, and ensure food security. Here are some key government initiatives and policies in Nepal's agricultural sector:

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3.2.1) Agriculture Development Strategy (ADS)

The Agriculture Development Strategy (ADS) is a comprehensive framework developed by the government of Nepal to guide agricultural development in the country. The ADS focus on sustainable agriculture, commercialization, and marketoriented Production. It aims to enhance productivity, promote value chain development, and strengthen market linkages for agricultural products. The strategy also emphasizes the importance of climate change adaptation, Research and technology transfer, and capacity building for farmers. The process of formulating this document for Nepali agricultural development involved extensive stakeholder participation, including governmental and donor concerns and farmer representatives, analyzing weaknesses such as coordination and policy failures, and proposing structural shifts to prioritize the well-being of small farmers. Additionally, it has also devised some provisions such as classifying the farmers and forming of high-level commission for farmer's rights; establishing community-based agricultural service centers to provide technical help for the farmers in crops and animal production at the local level; and the formation of Agricultural Development Fund for the implementation of the strategy(Yuba Raj Subedi, 2017).

3.2.2) National Agriculture Policy (NAP)

The National Agriculture Policy (NAP) provides a policy framework to guide the development of the agricultural sector in Nepal. It promotes sustainable and commercial agriculture, enhances productivity, and ensures food security. The policy emphasizes the need to modernize agriculture, improve access to inputs and technology, strengthen agricultural research and extension services, and promote private-sector agrarian investment. Agricultural policy is critical in determining the rate and pattern of economic growth and societal welfare. One set of guidelines, such as investment in education, health, public infrastructures (transportation, irrigation), science and technology, trade, etc., broadly impact agricultural sector productivity. In contrast, other sets of policies affect particular agricultural commodities or techniques of Production (Ganesh R. Joshi, and Binaya Joshi, 2021).

3.2.3) Agricultural Extension Services:

The government has offered farmers agricultural extension services with agricultural research institutions and extension agencies. These administrations mean further dispersing rural information, advances, and best practices to develop ranch efficiency and maintainability. Various aspects of crop cultivation, livestock management, pest control, soil health, and resource management are taught, consulted, and demonstrated by extension workers. The goal is to give farmers the knowledge and skills they need to use modern and sustainable farming methods.

3.2.4) Integrated Rural Development Project

The government-led Integrated Rural Development Project (IRDP) in Nepal focuses on comprehensive rural development and addresses several issues essential to enhancing rural populations' socioeconomic circumstances. The project recognizes that rural development is a complex and interconnected process, requiring a multi-dimensional approach beyond a singular focus on agriculture.

Regarding agriculture, the IRDP aims to promote sustainable farming practices and enhance agricultural productivity. This includes providing training and technical support to farmers, encouraging the adoption of improved techniques, and facilitating access to modern inputs. The project also emphasizes the importance of crop diversification to reduce risks associated with relying on a single crop and enhance the resilience of farming communities. There were eight IRDPs in operation in Nepal in the 1970s that, include the Integrated Hill Development Project, the Rasuwa Nuwakot IRDP, and the Rapti IRDP, among others, covering 23 districts in total (B. B. Pradhan, 1985). According to FAO (2010), grassroots-level extension infrastructures such as agriculture service center buildings, market yards, trails, rural roads, and minor irrigation projects built during IRDPs proved helpful (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, 2010).

3.2.5) Agriculture Research and Development

In Nepal's efforts to increase agricultural productivity, enhance food security, and promote sustainable farming practices, agrarian Research and development (R&D) are crucial. In a joint effort with worldwide associations, the country's rural exploration organizations effectively participated in research exercises to address the difficulties faced by ranchers and the homestead area. Rural Research and development in Nepal center around different regions, including crop improvement and assortment advancement. High-yielding, climate-resistant, and disease-resistant crop varieties that are suitable for local agroclimatic conditions are being developed by researchers. Farmers can use these improved varieties to better adapt to shifting environmental conditions, increase yields, and minimize crop losses.

In addition, agricultural Research encourages the use of environmentally friendly farming methods. Techniques for agroforestry, integrated pest management, organic farming, and conservation agriculture are studied and developed by researchers. Enhancing soil health and fertility, conserving water resources, and promoting ecological balance in agricultural systems are all benefits of these practices.

4) Problems of agriculture in Nepal:

the citizens living here in the future.

The agriculture sector in Nepal has tremendous potential for growth and development. However, it faces multiple challenges, such as land plotting, inadequate infrastructure, limited market access, and lack of modern technology. The ignorance in the problem aspect of agriculture here in Nepal cannot be done as it will result in multiple difficulties to

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The agriculture sector in Nepal plays a vital role in the country's economy. By 2000, the agriculture industry accounted for roughly 40% of GDP, while the manufacturing sector grew from 4% in 1975 to 9% by 2000. In 2022, the agriculture sector's contribution to GDP stood at 23.95%, whereas the manufacturing sector contributed 14.3% to GDP. (Kaatya Mishra, 2023)

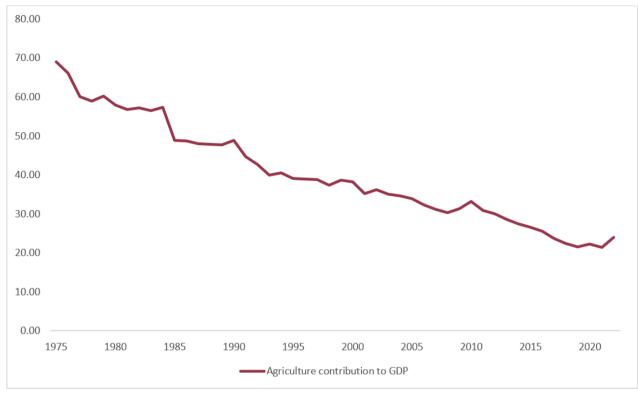


fig: agriculture contribution to GDP source: world bank data, agriculture sector contribution to GDP (1975-2022)

The agricultural sector continues to face various limitations and issues in Nepal. This article will discuss some of the bottlenecks that hinder the growth and potential of Nepal's agriculture sector.

4.1) The various problems in the agriculture process of Nepal are as follows:

4.1.1) Lack of proper level of Infrastructure:

Nepal's agricultural sector is hindered by a lack of infrastructure, including poor roads, limited access to electricity and irrigation, and inadequate storage facilities. Out of the 2.60 million hectares (ha) of land under cultivation, 1.80 million ha is irrigated, of which 1.40 million ha_lies on the Terai or plains, and the remaining 0.40 million ha of land remains unirrigated, usually dependent on the seasonal rains. Additionally, Nepal has made progress in developing storage facilities for agricultural goods – there is only 35 cold storage running in Nepal with a capacity of 3000 metric tons per cold storage, which isn't enough. (Kaatya Mishra, 2023)

4.1.2) Land Fragmentation:

Many farms in Nepal are small and fragmented, with an average size of just 1.1 hectares. This makes it difficult for farmers to use modern machinery and techniques, as the small size of their farms does not justify the investment in such equipment. Land fragmentation also leads to less efficient use of resources and lower productivity.

4.1.3) Limited access to credit and Technology:

Many farmers in Nepal face challenges in accessing credit and modern agricultural technologies. Limited access to credit prevents farmers from investing in improved seeds, fertilizers, machinery, and other inputs necessary for increased productivity. Moreover, the lack of access to modern agricultural technologies and information hinders the adoption of efficient and sustainable farming practices.

4.1.4) Traditional Farming Procedure:

Traditional farming practices can pose challenges to the modern agricultural sector in Nepal. While traditional farming methods have long been a part of the country's agricultural heritage, they can hinder productivity, sustainability, and competitiveness. Due to a lack of modern farming methods, about 25% of the land remains uncultivated. While quality seeds alone can increase agricultural production by 15%–20%, most farmers in Nepal use locally available seeds retained from previous cropping seasons because of poor penetration of formal seed markets in rural areas, inadequate seed

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multiplication, and the lower cost of locally available seeds, resulting in less than 10% of farmers currently purchasing seeds for major cereal crops. (Kaatya Mishra, 2023)

4.1.5) Limited Government Support:

The government of Nepal provides limited support to the agriculture sector, including research, extension, and credit services. This lack of support hinders the development of the sector and makes it difficult for farmers to access the resources and knowledge they need to improve their agricultural practices and increase their productivity. (Major Problems of Agriculture in Nepal by Nepaliinfopedia, 2023)

4.2) Effect of Covid – 19:

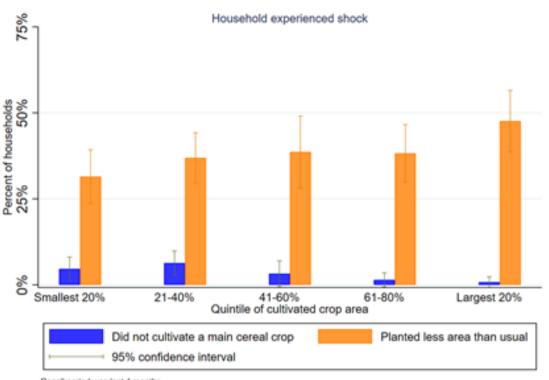


fig: women selling and buying vegetables in the street of Kathmandu.

4.2.1) Risks to agriculture and Food systems:

Cultivation of the main cereal crop fell

- 5% percent of smallholder farmers reported being unable to plant their main cereal crop—paddy in Terai and maize or millet in the hills—during the summer of 2021 for reasons including lack of family labor, availability of land to cultivate, and the inability to purchase quality seed.
- 47% of large landowners reported that they cultivated less area for the main cereal crop than in the previous year. This number was lower for smallholder farmers at 31%. (Karishma Wastipaul; Christiangogi Grewaltanay; and Balantrapuodbayar Batmunkh, 2022)



Recall period was last 4 months. Source: Phone survey July 2021.

fig: main cereal cultivation in summer 2021. source: world bank

4.2.2) Rural Poverty

4.2.2.1) Challenges:

Typically, rapid economic growth can help reduce rural poverty. But economic growth is no panacea. Rural poverty has persisted where policies:

- a) Did not pay sufficient attention to improving agricultural productivity and rural services and infrastructure,
- b) failed to provide rural populations with access to social services and social protection,
- c) neglected the development of rural producer and consumer organizations, and
- d) ignored women's specific challenges in accessing productive resources and social services.

4.2.2.2) Solution to rural Poverty:

Investing in agriculture has a greater impact on reducing poverty than investing in other sectors, as it offers the most direct route for rural people to benefit from their main assets: land and labor. However, it isn't the full picture.

While addressing agricultural livelihoods is the starting point, reducing rural poverty also requires:

- a) increasing productivity of small-scale farms and improve their access to markets
- b) promoting more efficient value chains,
- c) creating jobs, especially for the youth
- d) encouraging economic diversification and
- e) investing in people and fostering skills that can be used in agricultural and non-agricultural activities.

The 193 countries who make up the United Nations have established 17 goals that will guide the actions of the international community for the next 15 years (2016-2030). The 2030 Agenda offers a vision of a fairer, more peaceful world in which no one is left behind.

5) Solutions and remedy for the problems:

There are just some of the solutions that could help to address the problems of agriculture in Nepal. By implementing these solutions, the government, private sector, and international donors can help to boost agricultural productivity, improve food security, and reduce poverty in Nepal. These remedies are listed as follows:

5.1) Improved irrigation systems: Nepal is a mountainous country with a monsoon climate, which means that rainfall is often erratic and unpredictable. This can make it difficult for farmers to irrigate their crops, which can lead to crop failures. Improving irrigation systems would help to ensure that farmers have access to water when they need it, which would help to increase crop yields and improve food security.

5.2) Modern farming practices: Many farmers in Nepal still use traditional farming practices, which are often inefficient and can lead to soil erosion and other environmental problems. Modern farming practices, such as crop rotation, use of fertilizers and pesticides, and conservation tillage, can help to improve crop yields, reduce environmental impact, and make farming more profitable.

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5.3) Government support: The government of Nepal can play a role in supporting the agriculture sector by providing farmers with access to credit, technical assistance, and other resources. The government can also help to improve the infrastructure, such as roads and storage facilities, that is needed to support a vibrant agriculture sector.

6) Conclusion:

We examined data from several years and added it to our comprehensive datasets of numerous industries. The outcome provided insights into the relationship between agriculture and its impact on many sectors of the country because of the breadth and variety of timelines we employed.

Here in the article, we were able to acknowledge all detailed information of Agriculture in Nepal with extended data regarding problems of it that is being faced by all agriculturalists. This paper also explored broader understanding of the problems they face the impacts of COVID-19 in their personal lives.

To sum up all the factual evidences, over 60% of the population of Nepal work in agriculture, which also accounts for over 20% of the country's GDP. However, the agricultural industry is dealing with a number of issues, such as soil erosion, climate change, and inadequate infrastructure. Through a number of initiatives, such as enhanced irrigation systems, contemporary farming methods, and greater market accessibility, the government of Nepal is attempting to address these issues. Despite the difficulties, Nepal's agriculture industry has a great deal of potential to contribute to the country's economic growth and the eradication of poverty.

By addressing the challenges facing the agricultural sector and investing in its development, Nepal can achieve its goal of economic development and poverty reduction.

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