
Initiative 7: Himalayan Farmers' Livelihoods Enhancement Drive

Empowering communities through new opportunities and skill building

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Background

The inhabitants of the Indian Himalayan Region (IHR) confront wide range of socio-economic and environmental challenges. Efficient management of bioresources along with attaining livelihood security and environmental protection has always been a defying task for mountain folks. Limited livelihood options driven by traditional techniques are main peculiarities of rural inhabitants in the IHR. Nearly 70% of workforce and over 85% of women are involved in diverse farming activities. Moreover, the responsibility to carry out farming - related operations although is bestowed upon women shoulders; paradoxically they are unaware of latest advancements and technological developments. The overall agriculture is subsistence in nature that does not provide sufficient food and income to ever-increasing population. A large share of local needs is also met from forest areas. Generally the male folks migrate to plain areas in search for better livelihood options.

Rural Technology Complex

- RTC was established in GBPIHED in 2001, so far over 500 training courses have been organized benefiting over 20,000 farmers.
- Technology demonstration and capacity building are key components of RTC.
- There is need for large scale establishment of Rural Technology Centers at its Hqs and regional Units in the mountains, which can act as conduits between technology developers and the real users.

The sustainability of the Himalayan region is threatened by deterioration of forest resources to meet the growing demand of its inhabitants. Land degradation, deforestation, deterioration of water resources and increasing poverty are the main issues that have not only threatened the livelihoods of mountain people but also affected the much larger inhabitants of adjoining India-Gangetic plains. Improvement in productivity, reduction in drudgery, bioprospecting of local bioresources and the provision of livelihood options are some key areas that need immediate focus. To improve the existing situation, there is an urgent need of large-scale demonstration of suitable technologies and practices, and to organize on-site trainings, awareness and capacity-building programmes for the target groups. As the farming is a knowledge intensive occupation, its best output could be driven through tapping collective knowledge and resources that exist with farming communities. A farmers' network can easily provide an answer to it. Considering this, a **Himalayan Farmers' Livelihoods Enhancement Drive** is proposed with an aim to provide local farmers, mainly smallholders, with opportunities that develop a community of expanding knowledge and empower them for livelihood security by developing climate resilient

farming systems with appropriate business networking and socializing them in a supportive and wide-open environment. The initiative will support voices from the fields and provide environment to express their grass-root level concerns and adapt new ideas, innovations and activities that best meet the local needs and strengthen their livelihoods. It will also work for climate resilient farming systems with economic self-sufficiency and environmental sustainability.

The objectives

- To support livelihood of mountain communities who are actively engaged in primary activities by sharing knowledge & experience of farming systems and related issues.
- To promote good livelihood practices, and self-sufficiency in quality produce and it's marketing.
- To empower farmers to develop climate change adaptable farming practices so as to enhance livelihood security and quality of life.
- To provide all stakeholders a congenial, compassionate environment and opportunity to learn, adapt and develop their capacities so as to increase social acceptability, environmental safety and conservation of resource through good governance.

Focus

- Database on farmers, farming systems and hill livelihood specific technologies.
- Organize skill building programmes, training of trainers (ToTs) and exposure visits.
- Live demonstrations and field based exercises, and technical support to farmers along with guidance for self-employment options.
- Development of need-based resource material.
- Promotion of joint storage or processing facilities, promote locally grown foods.
- Develop a web base information on farmers' network.

The outcomes

- Refined and location-specific farming systems and technology packages with diversified options for livelihood will be available at the community level.
- Development of a pool of skilled manpower at the community level with due emphasis on gender.
- Optimum utilization of local resources for enhancement of livelihood security and management of environmental health.
- Establishment of stakeholders organization and network for sharing of knowledge.
- Documentation of good and success stories for wider dissemination.
- Provide guidelines on pro-farmer policy for upgrading rural livelihoods.

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