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Nepal's ginger farmers to be the winners in plans to expand international trade

July, 2015, JHAPA- In a major milestone for the project, a ginger washing and processing plant is expected to open in the next few months in Jhapa district, in eastern Nepal. The plant will add value to ginger exported from Nepal, particularly in the target districts of Morang, Jhapa, Ilam and Panchthar, and allow farmers to earn higher export prices, with the potential to boost farm income by 30 percent.



Nepal is already the fourth biggest ginger exporter in the world, with about 70% of domestic production exported to India. Ginger crops generate important cash income for farmers in the target districts. However, many farmers are not aware of the best ginger varieties and best way to harvest and store their crops, to ensure they get maximum price for their harvest. Some farmers are growing lower yielding varieties, which are more susceptible to diseases, such as rhizome rot, and pests, such as rhizome fly and stem borer. Many have no capacity to store their crop until they can sell at the best market price, and most Nepalese ginger is washed, graded and packaged in India, rather than domestically.

By improving the varieties grown, and introducing new production techniques and post-harvest cleaning and grading, Nepalese farmers can produce larger crops of quality ginger and attract higher prices in export markets in India, and elsewhere.

As well as FAO and the Ministry of Agricultural Development, other partners in the ginger project include the Ministry of Commerce and Supplies; the Agro Enterprise Centre; the Federation of Nepalese Chamber of Commerce and Industries and the Nepal Ginger Producers and Traders' Association.

In late July, a monitoring team with representatives of FAO and the other partners visited the ginger washing and processing facilities, in Jhapa. During the visit, the Secretary at the Ministry of Commerce and Supplies, Nagindra Prasad Upadhyaya, emphasized the importance of cooperation among farmers, traders and the Ministry of Agricultural Development. The Assistant Representative (Programmes) of FAO in Nepal, Dr Binod Saha, said it was important for the local industry to have high standards of crop cleaning and production, to meet the sanitary, phytosanitary and food safety standards required by ginger importers.

The national project coordinator and Joint Secretary in the Ministry of Agricultural Development, Udaya Chandra Thakur, said he was pleased to see the motivation of the farmers and traders involved.

Farmers' representatives at the visit said they had already seen yields double, to 1.4 metric tonnes per ropani, in trial ginger crops grown in plots managed by a local Farmer Field School. Moreover, rhizome rot disease had been brought under control in the trial plots, with a combination of measures including cultural, biological and chemical.

More than 4000 farm households will be able to process their ginger crops at the plant, which will create 200 seasonal jobs and benefit 200 traders. The Jhapa ginger washing and processing plant will have the capacity to wash six metric tonnes of ginger per hour.



FAO in Nepal to reach more vulnerable farmers with humanitarian support

July 2015, Kathmandu - Even though the global media attention on Nepal has faded, those affected the most by the earthquakes face a long and difficult road to rebuild their livelihoods and recover from the disaster.

Food production is still significantly disrupted in the six most-affected districts, in the hills near the China border. Crop planting and harvesting has been interrupted, there is still a lack of food and shelter for livestock and many communities can't afford to repair damaged irrigation systems.

In these vulnerable communities, four out of five households depend on agriculture for their livelihoods. According to a report produced by the World Food Programme and the Nepal Food Security Monitoring System in May, on average 35 percent of households in the 11 worst-affected districts were limiting meal portions or reducing the number of meals per day.



FAO continues to support the most vulnerable farmers in the six worst-affected districts to help them return to planting crops, to protect stores of food and seeds, and to care for surviving livestock, so that they can feed their families, improve nutrition and earn income again.

As the monsoon continues and winter approaches, vegetable seeds are one of the most critical forms of immediate support for farmers. Seeds provided to farmers including fast-growing mustard broadleaf, radish and cowpea, that can all be harvested within around a month. In mid-August, FAO distributed more packets of mixed summer vegetable seeds to an additional 15 000 households in the remote upper hills.

In the coming weeks, FAO will reach even more farmers with urgent support. It will provide bags of wheat seeds to households for the winter crop; more packets of mixed winter vegetable seeds and grain storage bags; animal mineral mixture; corrugated iron for animal shelter and winter animal fodder. With so many irrigation systems still damaged after the earthquakes and subsequent aftershocks and landslides, water is now one of the biggest concerns for farmers. FAO expects this will contrib-



ute to a reduction in the summer and winter crops, compared to an average year.

In Nuwakot district, Vishnu Bahadur Mijar and his wife Vishnu Maya lost chickens, a cow and goats when their livestock shed collapsed during the first major earthquake. They also lost their home and a small shoe repair business which provided income for the family. Now they haven't been able to transplant their rice seedlings, because of a lack of water.

"There has been a shortage of rain and an irrigation canal was partially damaged in the earthquake," Vishnu Bahadur said. "If there is still no rain and we can't transplant our rice, life will be very difficult."

In response, FAO is planning to help farmers repair small-scale irrigation systems, to support agricultural production and supply water for households and animals. Almost three-quarters of households using irrigation reported substantial to severe damage to their water schemes after the earthquakes. If not repaired quickly, this will seriously affect winter food production, including the staple crop of wheat. This support will be delivered through a community-based, cash-for-work approach.

Generous early donors supporting

FAO Nepal earthquake response and early recovery

FAO relies on the support of donors to help the most vulnerable farmers in Nepal to rebuild their agricultural livelihoods.

We have already reached more than 130 000 vulnerable households, thanks to our generous early donors:

Government of Italy—EUR 400 000

Government of Belgium—USD 500 000

FAO also contributed USD 700 000 of its own funds.

Two additional early donors are now also providing generous support to FAO's earthquake emergency response:

Government of Norway—NOK 20 000 000

Government of Canada—CAD 2 million

Landslide prevention critical for early recovery in Nepal

July 2015, Kathmandu - The earthquakes have already had a significant impact on food security and agricultural production in vulnerable farming communities in Nepal's hills.

Now farmers are facing a major new threat to their livelihoods. Thousands of landslides have already been recorded in the worst-affected districts and many more are expected as the monsoon continues. These landslides have already cost more lives, blocked road access to remote communities and destroyed critical irrigation systems.

As FAO reaches more vulnerable farmers with urgent humanitarian assistance, it is also planning work to stabilize or prevent landslides and help repair small-scale irrigation systems. The priority is to identify landslides that pose a threat to farmers, their land, animals and irrigation systems. This is an important part of early recovery and rehabilitation in Nepal and would help to achieve the goal of 'building back better', which was strongly endorsed by the Government of Nepal and the

seepage. For larger cracks, a monitoring and early warning system can be established to give farmers notice of major new landslide risks.



Mr Hofer said FAO's experience in other parts of the world shows that, with the right measures, some landslides can be stabilized, reducing the risk of future disasters. "For example, after the Pakistan earthquake, FAO worked with local communities on landslide stabilization and prevention, as well as income-generating projects," Mr Hofer said.

"Within seven years, two major floods had occurred, but the damage was far less in the areas where we had worked, because communities were more resilient and the landscape had been restored."

During his visit to Nepal, Mr Hofer also convened the first joint meeting of the Nepal members of the Mountain Partnership—a UN voluntary alliance of partners dedicated to improving the lives of mountain peoples and protecting mountain environments—to discuss how they could join forces on the earthquake response.

"Farmers in the worst-affected districts have already suffered huge losses and major trauma," Mr Hofer said. "Now is the time to begin work to stabilize and prevent landslides, to help rebuild resilient livelihoods and help vulnerable farmers cope better with future crises."

In the weeks after the earthquakes, FAO delivered assistance to farmers including rice seeds and grain storage bags to 40 000 households and animal feed to 20 000 households. Mixed vegetables seeds were distributed to 50 000 households. FAO also recently provided packets of mixed vegetable seeds to an additional 15 000 households in the remote upper hills, to allow farmers to plant more vegetables before winter. Many roads are now inaccessible due to heavy rain, so FAO engaged porters and hired tractors to ensure the seeds reached isolated communities.



international community at the major donor conference in Kathmandu in June. FAO watershed management and mountains team leader, Thomas Hofer, recently visited Nepal to meet with farmers and see how their livelihoods have been affected by landslides. He said FAO could use a combination of measures such as fast-growing and deep-rooted trees and bushes, cages full of stones known as gabions, and small temporary 'check' dams to control the flow of water. In addition, FAO can identify and categorize major cracks in the six districts. Smaller cracks can be sealed off to prevent water

What is at risk if we don't support early recovery for the most vulnerable farmers in Nepal:

Long-term dependence on food assistance

Increasing food insecurity and poor nutrition

Population displacement as farmers abandon their land to seek income elsewhere;

The most vulnerable will become more isolated and marginalized.

New agribusiness project to improve food security in Nepal

July, 2015, Lalitpur – A two-year project has been launched in Nepal to improve market opportunities for fresh produce that is free of chemical residue. The project will help to develop marketing chains for seasonal and off-season vegetables and citrus fruits that have been identified as safe for consumers and of good quality.

Currently many agricultural families living in rural areas live below the poverty line and don't produce enough fresh food themselves to feed their families. They have no choice but to buy additional food from local markets, which has often been contaminated with chemicals and hazardous pesticides.

Health problems in these communities, including different types of cancers and coronary disease, can partly be attributed to this unsafe food. As well as the health benefits for consumers, the project will also benefit traders by reducing the risk that their product will be discarded on safety and quality grounds. In late July, the Ministry of Agricultural Development held an inception workshop in Lalitpur to launch the project, with the technical support of FAO. The workshop was attended by 50 participants, representing government and non-government organizations. Also present was Dr Rosa Rolle, Senior Agro-Industry and Post-Harvest Officer, from the FAO Asia Pacific Regional Headquarters in Bangkok.



Speaking at the workshop, FAO Nepal Assistant Representative (Programmes) Dr Binod Saha, said the project would help to improve the technical capabilities of actors along the value chain, in safe food production and marketing. National Project Coordinator, Dr Hari Babu Tiwari, emphasized that the Ministry was very aware of the need to improve the capacity of extension workers, farmers and private sector traders in market-oriented safe crop production.

SUCCESS STORY:

Agro-economic opportunities for women affected by conflict

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) is supporting a project, in collaboration with the International Labour Organization (ILO) and UN Women, to work with women affected by the armed conflict, from 1996 to 2006, that followed the Maoist insurgency in Nepal. The project is designed to address the economic, social and psychological effects of the conflict on women and their families. As part of the project, FAO is training women in techniques to increase farm income by boosting agricultural productivity, in the districts of Kavre, Ramechhap and Sindhuli.

Over the last two and a half years, 796 women affected by the conflict have been trained in the best ways to farm a range of crops, including ginger, potato, mushroom, tomato and beans; and in livestock production, including goats, pigs and boar bucks. Women have also been trained in farming techniques such as preparing mineral blocks, to improve the health of livestock, and growing animal feed. In Deurali VDC, in Ramechhap, members of the Bhirkot Kalika Women Farmers Group were taught how to prepare mineral blocks, provide balanced feed to animals, deworm and dip animals, grow turmeric crops and manage a kitchen garden. Mineral blocks help to ensure animals receive essential minerals and avoid iron and calcium deficiencies. They can also be an additional food source to help goats recover from poor nutrition, weight loss or the effects of parasites.



Chairperson of the group, Mana Maya Shrestha, said they were shown how to make mineral blocks with a mixture of red clay, the outer shell of chicken eggs, wheat flour and salt, for their goats. "We learnt that red soil is a source of iron, the outer shell of the egg provides calcium, iodized salt provides iodine and wheat is a source of energy," she said. She noticed the hair of the goats became more shiny and their appetites increased, after regular use of the mineral blocks. She said the animals were healthier, and more productive. On average, the weight of the goats increased by a reported 25 percent after regular use of the mineral blocks. Around three-quarters of the households that participated in the training have since adopted the recommended agricultural techniques. They have reported an average 35 increase in the productivity of their crops and livestock.

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