

Hill Agriculture: Challenges and Opportunities

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Introduction

About 70% of hills population is engaged in agriculture. Hills play a very important role in sustaining about 10% of the world population. Majority of the rural people are either cultivators or agriculture labourers. In Uttarakhand, about 70% of its population is living in rural areas depending mainly on agriculture. In addition; only 13% area in hills is under agriculture. The land holding in hill region is less than 1 hectare and that, too, is scattered in his distribution. Irrigation facilities are poor and most of the agriculture land could be utilized under rain- fed condition. Farmers in the hills have been chiefly engaged in agriculture for subsistence.

The low agriculture yield in the hills reflects:

1. The small size and scattered land holding.
2. Lack of irrigation facilities.
3. Lack of inputs and technology.
4. Lack of credit and marketing facilities.
5. The increasing climate variability has further affected these hill agro- ecosystem adversely.

Due to its hardiness, ability to thrive without water or other inputs, importance as a source of protein, and high market value, pulses and legumes have historically been farmed. However, due to a lack of improved varieties, production and post-harvest technology, value addition, and a lack of structured marketing in the area, local farmers are experiencing rising losses in their pulse production.

Key Achievements:

1. Hillside agricultural practices 9 districts and 225 settlements are included.
2. Over a 514-acre area, 18,000 households are engaged in the cultivation of high-value crops and seed production (including cereals, millets, pulses, spices, vegetables, and fruits).

3. 3,729 farmers have received training in post-harvest, marketing, and production technologies.
4. Two solar lift-based irrigation schemes were developed, covering a total area of 39.9 acres with various irrigation techniques, including micro irrigation systems.
5. Forty different farm machines, including a power tiller, weeder, seed drill, and various threshers, were provided and shown off in the farmer's field.
6. Five Custom Hiring Centers (CHC) were founded using money from the agriculture department. Cluster level federations and farmer organizations run and maintain these centers.
7. After being processed, 110 quintals of seed mountain crops were purchased by cluster level federations and distributed to their member farmers.
8. 27 Community Facility Centers (CFC), established to provide farmers with essential inputs and managed by community organizations, transacted business for Rs. 1.79 Crore and made Rs. 9.36 Lakhs in profit during the year.

Agriculture in Uttarakhand:

Taking into account the fact that agriculture would continue to play a prominent role in the districts' Annual Credit Plan the potential for significant expansion in developing industries such contract farming, agriproduct processing, off-season vegetable growing, commercial cultivation of aromatic and medicinal plants, high density fruit orchards, and floriculture.

Lead District Managers and Branch Managers should concentrate on meeting the banking needs of the SME and agricultural segments in order to achieve their Annual Credit Plan for 2012–13. Additionally, they must to concentrate on SHG and Micro Finance prospects in rural areas for both Farm Sector and Non Farm Sector operations. To create rural employment and a means of subsistence, rural entrepreneurs should be given sufficient possibilities to engage in allied businesses, food processing, and other small business operations.

Hill Industrial Development Policy of 2008:

The State Government revised the Hill Industrial Development Policy of 2008 to prolong its benefits through 2018 to 2025. The policy, which was introduced in 2008 for a 10-year period, is now valid through 2025. If new businesses begin production by 2015, they



will be eligible for all incentives, including transportation subsidies and price preferences, through 2025. If the industries are established in 2016, the benefits will only be offered for nine years, followed by eight years in 2017 and seven years in 2018. The regulation would expire in 2018. Additionally, the maximum capital subsidy for construction equipment and machinery has been raised to ₹60 lakh.

Additionally, the state will receive 11 new industrial hubs from the government, along with top-notch infrastructure. These hubs will all be established at each district's administrative center. These 11 new industrial centers would be developed at district headquarters in the hills by the State Industrial and Infrastructure Development Corporation for Uttarakhand (SIDCUL), which is known for its massive industrialization of the plains. Additionally, the districts of Sahaspur and Raipur in Dehradun as well as Haldwani and Ramnagar in Nainital have been included in the revised strategy.

Conclusion:

India also has to make numerous improvements in the way it manages agricultural operations. Although there is a weak correlation between improvements in agricultural performance and nutrition, the agriculture sector can still make nutritional improvements by increasing the incomes of women farmers' households, diversifying crop production, empowering women, enhancing agricultural diversity and productivity, and creating thoughtful price and subsidy policies that can promote the production and consumption of nutrient-rich foods. Agricultural livelihood diversification through agri-allied industries like animal husbandry, forestry, and fisheries has increased livelihood opportunities, boosted resilience, and resulted in substantial increase in labour force participation in the industry, which may promote Indian economic growth.