

**Food Self-sufficiency and Underutilized Crops in Mid-Hills,
Nepal: A Case Study of Hastichaur VDC, Gulmi District.**

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Abstract

Food security has been the global issues. Realizing the importance of food self-sufficiency and underutilized crops in achieving the household food security, the study of household food self-sufficiency and underutilized crops situation in Hastichaur Village Development Committee (VDC) of mid hill region was done.

The majority of the population of study area depends on agriculture for their livelihoods. And most of them have less land holding size. Local varieties such as millet, barley, buckwheat, amaranth and sorghum etc. were once important cereals in the rural areas of hills and mountain in Nepal. These crops have high nutritional values and can grow on marginal land with low agricultural inputs. Today, these crops are grown in limited scale considering 'poor people's food' and are being replaced by imported food and grains. The study shows that, of total cereal production in the study area, the percentage occupied by underutilized crops as millet and barley was high in comparison to national and district percentage. The production of buckwheat, amaranth and sorghum was very limited, just for their own use only. The food sufficiency situation was found poor in the study area. The food self-sufficiency by direct interview shows majority of the respondents (43.66%) has food up to 6 months only and on the basis of average calorie demand and available calorie the food self-sufficiency was 5.65 months. The main reason for this food self-insufficiency was low landholding ($p < 0.001$), large family size ($p < 0.001$), occupation ($p < 0.001$) and less use and production of local crops ($p = 0.005$). These are further supported by lack of irrigation and advanced agricultural technology, low production, lack of manpower, difficult to harvest local crops, change in food preference and farmer's interest towards other cash and commercial food crops. The food deficit was maintained by buying in market, engaging in off farm activities, borrowing and so on. Millet was produced in large amount but most of the production was used for the preparation of local alcohol and fodder for animal. Increasing production and adding value to these underutilized crops can enhance the household food self-sufficiency and livelihood of marginal people.

Key words: *Food security, marginal lands, cash crops, imported food,*

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Local Terms

<i>Bari</i>	Rain fed upland
<i>Brahmin &Chhetri</i>	The ethnic group so called upper level group of people in caste system.
<i>Dalit</i>	So called untouchable castes of Nepal who are categorized under the discriminated group.
<i>Khet</i>	Irrigated low land in Nepali.
<i>Khoriyan</i>	Non- irrigated land for grazing and fodder-fuel wood.
<i>Muri</i>	Nepali unit of crop equivalent to 48.8 kg of paddy, 68.6 kg of wheat, 63.2 Kg of maize and 72.64 kg of millet.
<i>Ropani</i>	Nepali land area equivalent to 0.052 ha.

Abbreviations and Acronyms

°C	Degree Celsius
%	Percentage
CBS	Central Bureau of Statistics
DDC	District Development Committee
EIU	Economist Intelligence Unit
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GFSI	Global Food Security Index
GoN	Government of Nepal
ha.	Hectare
HHs	House Holds
IFPRI	International Food Policy Research Institute
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
MoA	Ministry of Agriculture
MoAC	Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperation
NFC	National Food Corporation
NHI	National Hunger Index
NLSS	Nepal Living Standard Survey
NUS	Neglected and Underutilized Species
PCS	Perspective of Civil Society

R&D	Research and Development
SAARC	South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
USD	United States Dollar
VDC	Village Development Committee
WFP	World Food Programme