

BOOK REVIEW

Nepal Agriculture Perspective Plan. 1995. Agriculture Project Services Centre, Kathmandu and John Mellor Associates, Inc., Washington, D.C. Kathmandu: National Planning Commission, His Majesty's Government of Nepal. XXXXIV+337 pages.

This is a brief introduction of Nepal Agriculture Perspective Plan (APP) 1995-2015. The APP is the 20-year plan of His Majesty's Government of Nepal, National Planning Commission (NPC), prepared by Agriculture Project Services Centre (APROSC), Kathmandu and John Mellor Associates, Inc (JMA), Washington, D.C. with the support of Asian Development Bank (ADB) and other donor and cooperating agencies (e.g., World Bank, FAO). Readers of this 'review' may come up with two questions. First, why should the APP, a 1995 document be reviewed now? Surprisingly, many academic communities (e.g., professors/teachers, researchers, and others) who play significant roles in planning and development of Nepal are not fully aware of the APP. For example, the organizers of one of the biggest seminars on 'Environment and Agriculture' in Nepal saved their face by including a presentation of the APP only at the last minute of a year long planning period. They were simply unaware of the document. Such pathetic situation, actually, pushed me to put it in this academic journal, which is well distributed. Second, whether one of the contributors to the APP is eligible to review it? The APROSC and JMA prepared it on behalf of the NPC, His Majesty's Government of Nepal and the Asian Development Bank, and they are considered as authors. Chapter 13 'Environment', however, is my contribution. Therefore, my intention is not to review it critically but to share the information about the existence of the APP with large academic communities. As a matter of fact, I am not very qualified to review such a document critically.

The main objectives of the APP are to: (i) accelerate the growth rate in agriculture through increased factor productivity, (ii) alleviate poverty and

achieve significant improvement in the standard of living through accelerated growth and expanded employment opportunities, (iii) transform the subsistence-based agriculture into a commercial one through diversification and widespread realization of comparative advantage, (iv) expand opportunities for an overall economic transformation by fulfilling the precondition of agricultural development, (v) identify immediate, short-term and long-term strategies for implementation and to provide clear guidelines for preparing periodic plans and programs in future. The underlying philosophy of the APP is that the national economic growth is possible only through a sustainable growth in the country's dominant agriculture sector, which has a favourable multiplier effect on the sectors as well. The APP was formulated through various interactions and consultative mechanisms, which can be divided into three stages— a widespread consultation process, preparation of 26 technical reports, and writing the plan. The whole process took two years. Thus, the APP benefited directly and indirectly from many people, particularly from Dr. Ram Prakash Yadav, the then NPC member, Dr. Devendra P. Chapagain, team leader of the APP, and Professor John W. Mellor, the main expatriate advisor, whose concept/vision, commitment, and contribution brought the document in the final shape.

The APP with the foreword from Mr. Manamohan Adhikari, the then Prime Minister, has mainly five parts, which are divided into chapters and presented logically. The first part, 'Strategy', has three chapters (introduction, strategy, and accounting for growth). These chapters have elegantly identified the existing problems in agricultural growth, key priority areas/objectives, and justifications why the APP was needed, and developed the APP strategy—accelerate the agricultural growth rate sufficiently to obtain strong multiplier effects on employment growth both in agricultural and nonagricultural sectors. The APP devised a growth accounting framework (GAF) to estimate the expected input and its various policy changes upon agricultural growth. These chapters have opened up the horizon and the goals of the APP.

The second part, 'Priority inputs', has four chapters (irrigation, fertilizers, technology, roads and power). These chapters are presented logically to show why they have been selected as key areas, their status at present and at the end of the plan, and investment allocations. For example, the APP has proposed that year-round irrigated land will increase from 45900 ha. in 1994/95 to 1126000 ha. in 2014/15. The fertilizer use will

increase from 101000 in 1994/95 to 628000 nutrient metric tons in 2014/15 with an average increment of 26000 nutrient metric tons per year. Irrigation and fertilizer respectively comprised of 56% and 13% of the priority input investment in the first five-year period of the plan. The APP has recognized the importance of the road and power, and improved technology respectively with 20% and 9% of the priority input investment allocations in the first five-year of the plan.

The third part, 'Priority outputs', includes four chapters (livestock, high-value crops, agribusiness, and forestry) and provides investment allocations. For example under the APP, the growth rate of the livestock sector will increase from 2.9% at the base period to 6.1% at the end period of the APP. The annual growth rate of the high-value crops will accelerate from 4.8% during the base period to 5.8% during the end period. A total amount equal to 30% of the input priority investments (10% for livestock, 10% for high value crops and agribusiness, and 10% for forestry) is estimated for the first five-year period of the plan.

The fourth part, 'Impact', has four chapters of the priority impact areas (poverty and food security, environment, hills and mountains, and terai). Each chapter deals with positive and negative impacts of the APP on them, and provides enhancement measures for positive impacts and mitigation measures for negative impacts. The APP can have dramatic effects. For example, the poverty incidence will decrease from 49% to 14% during the APP period. The APP land use changes, high-value tree crops, community forestry and wildlife habitats, IPM, environmental education, and dispersed urbanization will have positive environmental impacts. Similarly, priority package program strategy in mountains and hills, and terai has emphasized foodgrain production and the interdependence of these ecological regions.

The fifth part, 'Implementation', has three chapters (investment, public policy, and institutions) that form an excellent part of the plan providing a framework for implementation. Policy priorities include public policy commitment, public investment in the four input priority areas, price policy, and land reform legislation with a provision for consolidation. The national support committee, the department of agricultural roads, the Agricultural Development Bank as lead agency, the Agricultural Inputs Corporation, and the Nepal Agricultural Research Council have been identified as priority institutions. The last part of the plan contains the epilogue, list of contributors and their contributions, list of members of the

APP committees and working groups, list of participants in the national seminar, references, and indexes.

The APP is unique for several reasons: (i) it is a long-term perspective plan under which many plans (e.g., for each district) can be developed, (ii) unlike other plans, it has identified just four key areas of priority, (iii) it has highly considered environment and gender issues providing independent and built-in programmes in every component of the plan, (iv) it is developed mostly by Nepalese experts with minimal expatriate involvement, (v) the APP is based on widespread consultation and participatory approach and 26 technical reports prepared by 21 experts, many of them are prominent figures and leaders in their field of expertise, and (vi) it has received unanimous commitments from all forms of government. Poverty alleviation, for example, has become the recent focus of both government and non-government organizations. However, saying and doing are not the same. No plan is good unless it is implemented. If implemented as per commitment, the APP certainly offers an opportunity to put Nepal on to a fast growth track that will bring rural prosperity, a rapid decline in poverty, dispersed urbanization, and an improved environment. The APP has generated interest in non-agricultural sectors (e.g., science and technology) in preparing their perspective plans.

– **Khadga Basnet**