

Policy Initiative on Mountain Agriculture: Emerging Issues and Lessons Learnt from IFAD Projects in HKH Region

Development of Less Favoured Areas is one of the central focus in IFAD's Strategic Approach for addressing Poverty Alleviation. Reflecting this approach, two thirds of the 43 IFAD projects funded since 2001, are under implementation in less favoured areas, particularly uplands and mountains. IFAD has several loan projects at different stages of implementation in the Hindu Kush Himalayas covering Bhutan, China, India, Nepal and Pakistan and a majority of these are collaborative partners for the ICIMOD Grant Programme. As most of these projects focus on livelihood security of the mountain poor and include the twin objectives of enhanced food security and income opportunities, agricultural development (together with the allied sectors) forms an important component in all these projects. The experiences of these Projects in addressing agricultural development are, therefore, excellent case studies for identifying policy issues and concerns that require immediate dialogue for redressal or offer examples of supportive policy that are candidates for upscaling and replication in the context of mountain agricultural development.

In the mountain context, developmental approaches have to take cognizance of the mountain perspectives as consistently highlighted by ICIMOD in order to be appropriate and effective. The IFAD Investment Projects are located across the HKH region and hence, offer an excellent opportunity to assess how mountain specificities influence agricultural development in the project areas. The Projects, by virtue of their location, would be subjected to different dimensions of these specificities and the approach of each of the Projects to address agricultural development would be determined by the varying intensity and elements of such specificities. While all the Projects would face the constraints consequent to mountain specificities – accessibility, fragility, vulnerability – or the opportunities offered due to diversity, the intensity and dimensions would vary due to locational variations within Hindu Kush Himalayas. Case studies documenting the experience of the Projects, therefore, can provide a rich learning experience and help to identify policy concerns and issues that require redressal. These documentations can also highlight innovative approaches and enabling policy environment and support that help promote agricultural development and hence, deserve replication and upscaling. Overall, the issues and concerns as well as the innovative approaches identified through this process can contribute to an understanding of the policy issues requiring dialogue in the HKH mountain agriculture development context.

The policy initiative would proceed along the following proposed process:

1. Inception Workshop
2. Documentation of case studies from IFAD Projects identifying /focusing on:
 - a. Project specific mountain specificities, prioritized by projects according to the intensity of constraint
 - b. Approaches adopted towards agricultural development (sectors, strategic thrusts)
 - c. Food security/Cash crop promotion and balance
 - d. Access to technology and ease of technical backstopping
 - e. Access to Credit
 - f. Access to markets
 - g. Existing policies – constrains or supportive
 - h. Priority policy issues requiring redressal
3. Policy analysis/assessment study on identified concerns for feeding into consultation/policy dialogue process
4. Country Consultation and Policy Dialogue between stakeholders (policy makers-projects-mountain farmer groups)
5. Regional Consultation and Policy Dialogue