

Chapter 8

Local Livestock Resource Planning in the Hills of Nepal

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Livestock play a pivotal role in the process of intensification of Nepalese agriculture. Livestock recycle nutrients on the farm, produce valuable outputs such as milk and meat from land that is not suitable for sustained crop production, and provide energy and capital for successful farm operation. Livestock raising is compatible with environmental concerns if improved management is used. Otherwise, it will bring conflict with the environment through overgrazing that can cause soil compaction and erosion, and decreased soil fertility, organic matter content, and water infiltration and storage.

Livestock sector development has featured in every plan since periodic planning started in Nepal in 1956. A Livestock Master Plan was approved by the government in 1993. Its main objective is to formulate and implement the livestock development strategy that includes five integrated sets of activities or programmes: livestock sector management, human resources development, agro-industries and market development, land-use management and environmental rehabilitation, and livestock improvement. Likewise, the Agriculture Perspective Plan (initiated in 1995) also gives a high priority to the livestock sector which is intended to contribute 45% of the agricultural GDP at the end of the 20-year plan period. At present, the livestock sector contributes 31% to agricultural GDP.

Fifty-two per cent of the population live in the hills and mountains that cover 77% of Nepal's land area. People in these two physiographic regions raise 4.3 million cattle, 2.3 million buffaloes, 4.3 million goats, 0.7 million sheep, 0.6 million pigs and 11.5 million chickens to produce 0.7 million t of milk, 0.12 million t of meat, and 276 million eggs, annually.

Existing livestock resources planning process

The National Planning Commission is the apex body that formulates the government's periodic (five-year) plans. Every year, it prepares a policy guideline on the basis of the periodic plan, and sometimes procedural guidelines with a specific format that all ministries should follow.

Once the Ministry of Agriculture and Co-operatives receives the policy guidelines, it prepares an agriculture policy and strategy (if required) in consultation with departmental heads. It then directs its four departments, including the Department of Livestock Services (DLS), to formulate an annual plan with a timeframe.

The DLS, in turn, conducts a workshop to prepare guidelines. The workshop generally consists of five regional directors, programme directors, senior livestock and veterinary officers, and officers from sample districts. The guidelines are based on the policy and strategy of the Ministry of Agriculture and Co-operatives and must be coherent with the policy of the National Planning Commission. Based on these guidelines, the DLS formulates possible programme activities. The guidelines, the format with programme activities, and the format for new projects are sent to the Regional Directorate of Livestock Services (RDLS). The guidelines and programme focus on service-oriented and output-oriented activities (Box 1).

Box 1: Pocket Package Programme (output-oriented) and Basic Livestock Services Programme (service-oriented)

The guideline focuses on the Pocket Package Programme and Basic Livestock Services Programme. The Pocket Package Programme is divided in three: commercial pocket, semi-commercial pocket, and poverty alleviation pocket. Commercial pockets for dairy cattle and buffaloes are selected on the basis of road access, availability of fodder, electricity, milk chilling/collection centre, easy access to credit and livestock services, and, of course, enthusiastic and dedicated farmers. The criteria for selection of the semi-commercial pockets are similar to the commercial pocket except that the package is recently initiated and is expected to reach commercial scale within 10 years. Commercial pockets for goats are selected on the basis of fodder availability and grazing land accessibility, easy credit access, access to markets, and nearness to livestock services. The poverty reduction programme is targeted at people who are below the poverty line (below an annual per capita income of NRs 4,440 = US\$ 60). These people are grouped into the general poor, underprivileged poor, and ethnic poor. Before planning this programme, the pocket is selected on the basis of forage availability (nearness to community forest, except for pigs), easy access to livestock services, and market access. Under this programme, at least five adult goats per family are given free to 10 families on the condition that every family should return five goats within two years. These goats are passed on to other groups of 10 families fulfilling the same conditions. For pig-raising groups, two piglets per family are provided free on the same conditions as goat-raising. This poverty alleviation programme is becoming popular in the country.

The RDLS circulates DLS's guidelines and formats to its District Livestock Services Offices (DLSO). It also fixes the date for a regional programme and budget formulating workshop for the next fiscal year with concurrence of the DLS. Every DLSO is directed to prepare an annual programme with budget that must be approved by the District Development Committee.

The DLSO asks its Livestock Services Centre and Livestock Services Sub Centres to collect programme activities according to the needs of farmers in the command areas. However, this demand collection has not been practised successfully. Usually, the DLSO conducts a district livestock services programme formulation workshop in which representatives from all livestock groups/committees, the district-based Agriculture Development Bank, District Forestry Office, District Cooperative Office, District Development Committee, Women's Development Office, and District Agriculture Development Office are requested to participate. In this workshop, major programme activities to be included are finalised. The DLSO prepares a programme with budget and submits to the District Development Committee workshop for approval. Once the programme budget is approved by the District Development Committee, the DLSO presents this programme budget at a three-day regional workshop.

DLSO staff and staff from central offices (DLS, Directorate of Livestock Production, Directorate of Livestock Services Training and Extension, Directorate of Animal Health) attend the regional workshop. Senior officers from the centre give directives and norms to facilitate easy implementation of programme activities. DLSO staff present the programme activities approved by the District Development Committee substantiated with an item-wise budget. Usually, there is a budget ceiling; this is generally an additional 10% of the current district budget. During this three-day period, there is thorough discussion of programme activities. The result is that all DLSOs should submit a final version of programme budget to the RDLs. The RDLs will compile them and send them to the DLS for approval.

The DLS collects and processes all district-level and central-level programmes within the budget ceiling and sends them to the Ministry of Agriculture and Co-operatives for further processing. The Ministry of Agriculture and Co-operatives will again ask central-level offices to defend programme activities that are mostly related to district-level programme activities.

The National Planning Commission examines the main programme activities to ensure that they comply with guidelines and policy. Central and district-level programmes should be defended by the offices concerned. At this time, representative officers from the Ministry of Finance also participate in finalising the DLS programme. The basis for approval of programme activities is as follows.

- Compliance with the strategy of the Agriculture Perspective Plan
- Linkage of proposed programme with policy and strategy of the Five-Year Plan
- Ratio of programme and administrative budget allocation (mainly, programme budget is appreciated)
- Expected benefit

Gaps

Although bottom-up planning is the main strategy for government planning, in reality, it is not effectively practised. Major weaknesses are as follows.

At the government agency level

- Junior technicians, the frontline service providers, are over-burdened with regular programme activities
- Junior technicians have little knowledge of the planning process
- DLSO officers are not committed to the programme planning process; most have poor knowledge of how to formulate new short-term projects
- Output-oriented programme coverage is small, so impact is almost negligible at the district level
- No working linkage with other line agencies
- Limited budget allocation
- Farmers' dependency on government inputs (kind and cash)

At the village level

- Generally, local farmers' groups/committees are not aware of livestock resource planning

- Farmers are not capable of identifying livestock potentialities or natural resource management because of limited knowledge
- Farmers are a heterogeneous group (ethnic and political differences)

Prerequisites for effective planning

Government agency/NGO responsibilities

- Sensitise village development committee members about livestock resource planning
- Select energetic and committed farmers from each ward
- Train these farmers as livestock promoters who will sensitise all villagers (farmers) about livestock resources management
- Help identify potentialities of specific livestock improvement

Village development committee responsibilities

- Collect basic data on livestock population, pasture, and forest coverage, markets/bazaars, electricity, road, human population, education level, per capita income and similar
- Help sensitise farmers about livestock sector development
- Provide financial help to livestock promoters
- Be actively involved in livestock resource planning, and bear responsibility for effective implementation