

The conditions in mountain areas are significantly different from those prevailing in the plains. Yet most planners in the public sector in South Asia, planning for the development of hilly and mountain areas and mountain agriculture, either come from the plains, or have been trained to work with plains conditions and have applied green revolution technologies that may have worked well under those conditions, like a one-size-fits-all model. This model has not been quite as successful in mountain areas because it fails to consider and factor in the significant differences of the mountain condition: the steep slopes, high altitudes, less arable land and therefore, the subsistence nature of mountain farming, as well as deep variances in mountain micro-climates and the kind of crops that can be grown, the distance to markets, amongst others.

This *Talking Points* document offers an alternative mountain-specific framework that planners and those working with mountain farmers can use to improve the conditions of mountain farmers, push for the agricultural development of mountain areas with the unique specificities, obstacles, and challenges facing mountain areas in mind, while promoting the conservation of the increasingly fragile mountain resource base. The framework highlights the mountains' comparative advantages, such as the potentials for organic and niche mountain products, and advocates adding value to mountain environmental services. It also urges a review of policies and programmes that carry with them a bias against mountain areas, in order to develop mountain agriculture and improve the conditions of mountain farmers.

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