

(Workshop Report)



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Foreword

International Workshop on Institutional Strengthening for Sustainable Mountain Agriculture

Organised by the Mountain Farming Systems' Programme of ICIMOD

**International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development
Kathmandu, Nepal**

Foreword

Mountain agriculture is entering a critical phase of transition as population demands for food and other agricultural commodities escalate rapidly and the damage to biological and physical systems supporting agriculture continues to accelerate. The mountain areas of the Hindu Kush-Himalayas already have a population close to 120 million and every year another two million are being added to a very fragile agricultural environment that has historically offered few other economic options for survival. Efforts to develop mountain agriculture are very recent. While some pockets demonstrate encouraging signs, the bulk of mountain agriculture, gripped by numerous environmental problems, is showing signs of unsustainable changes. A major effort is needed to restore the biological and physical systems and to improve and increase agricultural productivity to meet the burgeoning demands for food and other commodities.

ICIMOD's Mountain Farming Systems' Programme has started a systematic analysis of mountain agricultural development issues to identify ways to promote its sustainable development. Agricultural development strategies for mountain areas in different countries were reviewed. Case studies of agricultural changes in specific areas were undertaken to identify success stories. In order to share each other's experiences in the development of mountain agriculture, many discussions were organised including an International Symposium on Sustainable Strategies for Mountain Agriculture. One of the main conclusions of these activities focussed on the critical need for strengthening organisations and institutional mechanisms for promoting sustainable mountain agriculture. The institutional gaps in terms of planning and policies, research and development, and support services were very large indeed. Available capacity did not match the challenge on hand and a major effort was needed to develop national and local capacities for managing mountain agriculture on a sustainable basis. ICIMOD put together a project to strengthen institutions devoted to mountain agriculture and the programme received financial support from the Government of the Netherlands.

This present monograph provides an overview of the first phase review exercise completed under the project. It documents detailed inputs provided by participating institutions and individuals of ICIMOD member countries. This is probably the first time a comparative review and assessment of agricultural development institutions in the Hindu Kush-Himalayas are presented and it provides many important lessons that are both common and specific. Each of the country studies is being published separately by ICIMOD. Under Phase II of this programme on institutional strengthening, ICIMOD is focussing on addressing some of the specific recommendations in each of the ICIMOD member countries.

I take this opportunity to thank all our collaborating agencies and individuals in the ICIMOD member countries for their valuable analyses and insights. I gratefully acknowledge the full support provided for this programme by the Government of the Netherlands. I would also like to thank Mahesh Banskota, N.S. Jodha, Pitamber Sharma, and Tej Partap for their efforts in preparing this important document. Finally, I sincerely hope the document will be of value to national agencies for strengthening agricultural development institutions in the Hindu Kush-Himalayas and, through them, to the millions of farmers in their daily search for a sustainable livelihood.

Egbert Pelinck
Director General

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