

Chapter 1

Background

Planned development in Bhutan was initiated only in 1961. Development achievement since then has been significant and diverse. However, the Royal Government of Bhutan (RGoB) is not complacent; it is fully aware of the issues related to land resources and their utilisation. Localised problems have started to emerge although they are not experienced in the magnitude and to the extent of some other countries.

This document has been written for the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD), Kathmandu, Nepal, as a part of the Centre's regional programme to take stock of the current situation of land resources in the Hindu Kush-Himalayan Region. National problems and potentials for improvement have to be understood before putting them into a regional context.

1.1 Objectives and Study Methodology

This publication attempts to

- describe current land-use patterns in Bhutan,

- identify and present existing policies and programmes affecting land resources,
- highlight emerging land resource problems, and
- list major impacts of the policies.

The document has been written by the Policy and Planning Division (PPD) of the Ministry of Agriculture (MoA) based on its general and professional knowledge. It has been discussed further with other organizations at several sessions and workshops. Since land degradation problems are just emerging, the main emphasis will be on impacts and not details of the land degradation itself. A case study was conducted to find out how farmers have benefited from agricultural policies and programmes.

The study started first with the identification and collection of relevant literature available within the MoA and other offices. An extensive study of policies, plans, acts, and review papers was undertaken. The list of the documents referred to is included in the bibliography. Key informants were staff of the MoA in Thimphu. District staff,

extension agents, and the *Gup* (elected leader of a block), and some farmers from Samdrup Jongkhar district were also consulted and interviewed. A list of these informants is provided in Annex 1.

The case study was conducted to investigate the impact of agricultural policy in Martshalla geog in Samdrup Jongkha district. This geog was deficit in food in the late 1960s. The situation has now changed. The case study tried to find out if there was a link between agricultural policy and this development. Annex 2 provides details of

how the case study was conducted. The findings are incorporated in the section on impacts of agricultural policy.

This document is divided into four chapters. The first chapter is an introduction. Chapter 2 presents an overview of the country and its major features, including macro-economic progress achieved so far. Chapter 3 lists and highlights current policy and its legal framework, and its impact on land resources and their utilisation. Chapter 4 concludes with a summary of findings.

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