

Chapter Eight

Recommendations

In order to alleviate poverty in the HKH region, farmers could be moved away from the subsistence economy by exploiting known abilities and tested technologies to lead this area into a new millennium. Since the social order is ossified with centuries of traditions, it would certainly require major and carefully planned modifications in the overall social system, although not total social disintegration. However, incorporation of modern technologies has already caused extensive damage to social structures in various niches. The sudden damage or unplanned breakage of the social order may not be compatible with the fragility of the mountain ecosystem; this is the most important aspect to be considered during any development plan.

The goal of this publication is promotion of promising farm technologies through a vigorous delivery mechanism in such a way that it is taken up by end users. However, such things are never so simple and the process has several implications other than those mentioned above. This process should pass through a careful planning and evaluation stage at different levels, so that the appropriate technology package is friendly to the physical, socio-cultural, and environmental settings of the region. The following recommendations are made in this regard:

- An international conference on 'appropriate farm technologies' should be organized. The participants may represent all levels, i.e., farmers, extension services, public departments, policy-makers, non-government organizations (NGOs), International Organizations, etc. The objective of this conference should be to assess promising technologies from different dimensions and to remove future constraints and possible implications. The conference may also extend an opportunity to hand over this technology package to all concerned in one stroke.
- The significance of indigenous knowledge cannot be overruled by modern technologies, rather, innovations should be compatible to traditional methods in such a friendly manner that productivity is improved with little or no fragility consequences. Quite a few research findings have recognized many primitive techniques of various regions as appropriate and sustainable and scientists are now becoming more interested in traditional agronomic practices to eliminate the deficiencies from modern agriculture. This transfer of learning should occur rapidly before this wealth of practical knowledge is lost forever (Altieri et al. 1987). More re-

search should be funded for improving existing indigenous technologies by making improvements and by blending them with modern ideas.

The inhabitants of the region have long been marginalised from the mainstream. Although very well equipped with indigenous wisdom of the general balance of the mountain ecosystem, they obviously lack a deeper perception of the delicate and minute linkages between different external and internal elements. Similarly, most outside researchers, with excellent modern knowledge, lack in-depth perception of the fragile ecosystem to develop appropriate technologies or propose improvements in indigenous practices by swiftly incorporating modern knowledge. Training (short as well as long term) of local inhabitants should be undertaken as a new initiative. It may be time consuming but has to be done as quickly as possible. It should focus on economic literacy, agricultural literacy, social awareness, and all other parts of the system.

- The female segment is roughly 50 per cent of the human population. Women are central to agricultural development, but their concerns have

been recognised too little. This half of the human populace is particularly marginalised especially (in terms of literacy) in the social framework of the mountain environment. The male-dominated power structure discriminates against women in terms of direct access and control over development resources. An outspoken approach aimed at achieving gender equity may severely injure social and family bonding, which is inevitably desired for sustainability. The sociologist must examine carefully how the peaceful transformation of the social order can be achieved.

The current form of this publication offers a palatable and diversified technological menu which can be used to encourage policy-makers, public managers, NGOs, and international donors to realise the opportunities and potential of agricultural development, heavily linked to poverty alleviation in the HKH region. The dissemination of each technology at the grass roots' level would, however, need further details about the technology in question. It would be desirable to prepare a separate extension kit in local languages for each category (i.e., chapter) of technology with sufficient detail for extension agents operating at the grass roots' level.