

Mountain Farming Systems



Discussion Paper
Series No. MFS 96/2

MOUNTAIN AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT PROCESSES AND SUSTAINABILITY — MICRO-LEVEL EVIDENCE FROM HIMACHAL PRADESH, INDIAN HIMALAYAS

H.R. Sharma

International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development
Kathmandu, Nepal
1996

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ISSN 1024 - 7548

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Published by

International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development
G.P.O. Box 3226
Kathmandu, Nepal

Typesetting at ICIMOD Publications' Unit

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INDIAN HIMALAYAS

H.R. Sharma

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Dr. H.R. Sharma is a Farm Economist at the
Himachal Pradesh Agricultural University, Palampur, Himachal Pradesh, India

December 1996
International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development
Kathmandu, Nepal

Acknowledgments

The author is grateful to the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD) for providing him with a short-term fellowship to work on sustainable mountain agriculture. In the course of study, discussions with Dr. Mahesh Banskota, Dr. Tej Partap, and Mr. Sugandha Shrestha helped to clarify various issues. While revising the report for publication, the author also benefitted from discussions with Dr. Pradeep Tulachan. He is grateful to all of them. He is equally thankful to the participants at the seminar, which the author conducted at ICIMOD in August 1995, for their comments and suggestions. At home, he remains very much indebted to Dr. R.P.S. Tyagi, Vice-Chancellor, and Dr. B.M. Singh, Dean, College of Agriculture, Himachal Pradesh Agricultural University, Palampur who have always been a source of inspiration and help. Thanks are also due to Dr. Parkash Mehta, Head, Department of Agriculture, and Dr. Tek Chand Bhalla, a personal friend, for their help and encouragement. The help extended by Dr. Harbans Lal and Dr. Brij Bala in the collection and analysis of data and by Ms. Neetu Ghale in word processing the manuscript is also acknowledged gratefully.

PREFACE

Applied research on mountain agriculture's sustainability and unsustainability dynamics has been an important undertaking for the Mountain Farming Systems' Programme of ICIMOD since 1988. It was made possible, to some extent, through the constant support of Ford Foundation to the MFS Programme for its project on "Strategies for Sustainable Mountain Agricultural Development", which was implemented in three phases.

The objectives of the current phase of the project (1994-96) focus on enhancing the understanding of the transformation processes and sustainability of mountain agriculture in the Hindu Kush-Himalayan region (the Indian Himalayas and Nepal). This was accomplished by collecting empirical evidence through conducting field studies on cash crop dominated farming systems, one each in the Kullu district of Himachal Pradesh and district of Sikkim in the Indian Himalayas, and one in the Ilam district of Nepal.

This Discussion Paper presents findings of the case study on Agricultural Development Processes and Sustainability in the Kullu district of Himachal Pradesh. The study has tried to document the processes of change in two development blocks (sub-district units). The better transformed development block is comprised of the well-known apple orchards and vegetable farming which have contributed to the well-being of farmers in the Kullu Valley.

The study has successfully highlighted the phenomenon of a dynamic change process that has been occurring in mountain farming systems. It has also shown that when mountain farmers come out of the poverty trap, they concentrate on fewer farming and livelihood options in comparison to the situation under subsistence farming.

Contents **A**bstract

The present study was undertaken in Kullu District of Himachal Pradesh (India) to examine the effects of mountain agricultural development processes on livelihood options and their implications on sustainability. The micro evidence indicates that, while the process of agricultural transformation does not affect the number of livelihood options adopted by the households, their quality in terms of households and per worker earnings improves significantly. The data also show that the transformation based on harnessing the local niche, in consistency with mountain specificities, tends to be more sustainable and have positive effects on the quality of life, equity, and the natural resource base.

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