



## ENHANCING RURAL LIVELIHOODS IN UNDERUTILIZED/ABANDONED AGRICULTURAL LAND THROUGH AGROFORESTRY

December 2018

SDGs:



Country: Nepal

Project Symbol: TCP/NEP/3602

FAO Contribution: 311 000 USD

Duration: 1 October 2016 – 31 December 2018

Contact Info: Yurdi Yasmi  
Yurdi.Yasmi@fao.org



#### Implementing Partners

Ministry of Forests and Environment (MOFE);  
International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN)

#### Beneficiaries

Farmer groups; Women's farmer groups; Community forest user groups; Association for Family Forest Owners Nepal (AFFON)

#### Country Programming Framework (CPF)

Priority Area 1: Food security;  
Priority Area 2: Institutional and policy support;  
Priority Area 3: Market orientation;  
Priority Area 4: Conservation benefits

## BACKGROUND

Nepal is facing an increasing problem of underutilization/abandonment of agricultural land. In the context of food insecurity and poverty across rural communities, the growing current scale of abandonment of agricultural land has become one of the key development challenges in recent decades. As a result of this trend, rural hill districts are currently experiencing food insecurity due to a lower rate of production and productivity per hectare. This has created a challenge in terms of feeding a growing population. In this context, the only way to address the problem of food insecurity is to increase agricultural production and the productivity of available land.

In order to address this emerging issue, as per the request and cooperation of the Government of Nepal, FAO and the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) implemented the pilot project, "Enhancing rural livelihoods in underutilized/abandoned agricultural land through agroforestry" with the objective of identifying and assessing approaches for implementation of so-called "best bet" agroforestry options that have the potential to generate production and income from abandoned agricultural land.

## EXPECTED IMPACT

The livelihoods of people adopting best bet agroforestry options in underutilized/abandoned agricultural land were expected to be enhanced. This can only be achieved when the productivity of underutilized/abandoned agricultural land is increased.

## ACHIEVEMENT OF RESULTS

The key results achieved are highlighted below.

- The status and trends of land abandonment indicate that an average of 44 percent of land is estimated to be abandoned across Nepal. Land abandonment is particularly high at the pilot site, reaching 68 percent.
- Cardamom, fodder, tea, banana, coffee and lime production were the six agroforestry based practices identified in pilot sites. In addition, at least three to five best bet options were identified in each of the project's agro-ecological zones.
- A total of 511 households in the pilot site participated in adopting six best bet agroforestry practices on an area of more than 200 ha of land.
- A total of 15 280 tree, 66 200 forage slips and 24 000 cardamom and coffee seedlings were planted.

- Two independent seedling resource nurseries (one per district) were established, producing 17 992 high-value cash tree seedlings and over 100 000 forage and grass slips in the second cycle of plantation. More than half of these seedlings were sold to neighbouring communities. This is one of the key self-sustaining programmes of the project.
- A National Agroforestry Strategy and Action Plan (NAFSAP) was prepared based on project learning, mostly from two policy dialogue workshops, two national-level consultations and two national-level Training of trainers (TOT).
- Two TOTs and eight associated field trainings produced 273 field trainers (170 female and 103 male) across two districts.

### IMPLEMENTATION OF WORK PLAN

The project was implemented jointly by FAO and IUCN Nepal. The IUCN mainly took responsibility for implementing field-level activities of the three outputs, namely the generation of knowledge of the status of underutilized/abandoned agricultural land, piloting of best bet agroforestry options on abandoned lands and awareness and capacity-building of related stakeholders at field level. FAO took the lead role in developing the NAFSAP in order to scale up the utilization of abandoned agricultural land, as well as the follow-up of field-level activities with IUCN. All 14 activities proposed in the logical framework were implemented within the planned time frame and budget. However, the responsibility for hiring an international consultant and conducting a final workshop on lessons learned was assigned to IUCN because FAO was unable to sign a contract with the consultant exceeding a period of 100 days.

A longer than expected period of time was spent on the finalization of the NAFSAP, owing to frequent changes in both government and institutional structure. Support from the Ministry of Forests and Environment (MOFE), formerly the Ministry of Forests and Soil Conservation (MOFSC), remained highly positive and encouraging, leading to synergies in the accomplishment of the project's target.

### FOLLOW-UP FOR GOVERNMENT ATTENTION

The piloting of best bet agroforestry practices cannot be completed within a short period of time – two planting cycles are not sufficient – and it is difficult to carry out follow-up in the changing context of new government.



As a result, a complementary project to link this achievement with the local and provincial governments is imperative. In addition, the project needs to be developed for the implementation of the NAFSAP. In the meantime, the draft NAFSAP should be signed by the Government, with the commitment of donors sought for funding of the project.

### SUSTAINABILITY

#### 1. Capacity development

Capacity development took place in a number of ways, including an exposure visit by promoter farmers to agroforestry demonstration sites in the neighbouring districts, national-level agroforestry TOTs, field-level training and workshops.

As mentioned above, a total of 273 farmers, 170 of them women, were trained and provided with TOT field manuals. Two national-level policy dialogues, in particular, helped policy-makers to understand field-level problems relating to the implementation of agroforestry on abandoned agricultural lands. The trained human resources at both local and national levels will continue to serve local communities in future.

Three NAFSAP consultation meetings, which were held with a variety of line ministries, departments, the national planning commission, bilateral projects, private sector agencies, Non governmental Organizations (NGOs) and civil societies, strengthened knowledge in the understanding of agroforestry and its scope to improve rural livelihoods.

The database systems created with support from the project will contain valuable information for future use by the Government and other stakeholders. A number of development partners and national and international NGOs have shown interest in joining forces with the Government for the promotion of best bet agroforestry options on abandoned agricultural land. Given that the project aimed to mobilize different government line ministries and departments at central, provincial and local levels for planning, implementation, monitoring and coordination, the wealth of knowledge and skills gained through field implementation of the project will remain within the government system. Similarly, the project involved a number of grassroots organizations, such as Community Forest User Groups (CFUGs) and Leasehold Forestry User Groups (LFUGs), and provided them with the necessary knowledge, skills and technology. The groups are likely to continue to apply their acquired knowledge and skills beyond the project's implementation period.

## 2. Gender equality

As an inclusive development strategy, equal priority was given to the participation of women and men in the project, although women were prioritized in terms of participation in all training conducted, accounting for 63 percent of total participants. Women's needs and priorities were considered by the project. In terms of use of resources by gender, equal access was ensured. During the selection of the best bet agroforestry practices, one criterion was to implement gender-friendly best bet agroforestry. Two women, one each from IUCN and FAO, were recruited to promote field activities. In the draft NAFSAP, a separate output was envisioned for inclusive gender development.

## 3. Environmental sustainability

Agroforestry itself constitutes a part of the environment without which the project would be incomplete. Environmental considerations, including carbon payment and biodiversity conservation benefits, are included in the NAFSAP. This was appreciated and welcomed by participating members, including representatives of both government organizations and NGOs. The species selection was based on local adaption and environment feasibility. In the selection of fodder trees and grasses, legume and nitrogen-fixing species were prioritized.



## DOCUMENTS AND OUTREACH PRODUCTS

- Inception report. January 2017.
- District inception report. March 2017.
- Site selection report. April 2017.
- Institutional capacity development needs assessment. Enhancing rural livelihoods through agroforestry in abandoned agricultural land. August 2017.
- Fact sheets about land abandonment in pilot sites. FAO. 2017.
- Baseline survey report on enhancing rural livelihoods in underutilized/abandoned agricultural land through agroforestry. January 2018.
- Training manual for farmer field training. January 2018.
- Best Bet Agroforestry Products and their Market Analysis and Development report. September 2018.
- Agroforestry Training of Trainers manual. October 2018.
- Draft National Agroforestry Strategy and Action Plan (NAFSAP). October 2018.
- Project proposal for implementation of NAFSAP on abandoned agricultural land in Nepal. November 2018.
- National assessment of underutilized and abandoned agricultural lands. 2018
- Video of field implementation and monitoring activities of TCP/NEP/3602.
- NAFSAP 2018-2028 to enhance rural livelihoods in abandoned/underutilized agricultural land in Nepal.

### ACHIEVEMENT OF RESULTS - LOGICAL FRAMEWORK

<b>Expected Impact</b>	Livelihoods of people adopting best bet agroforestry options in underutilized/abandoned agricultural land enhanced		
<b>Outcome</b>	Productivity of underutilized/abandoned agricultural land increased with significant contribution to livelihood enhancement		
	<b>Indicator</b>	Increased agroforestry products and services	
		Better income for rural people from agroforestry practices	
		Wide application of agroforestry for better land productivity and income	
	<b>Baseline</b>	Baseline assessment survey	
		Baseline assessment report	
		Baseline assessment survey and report	
	<b>End Target</b>	Best bet agroforestry options piloted in six locations in three districts; 400 villagers participate in the piloting of agroforestry; 2 nurseries established in pilot sites	
		Small-scale enterprises and marketing trainings conducted in three districts, involving 400 villagers; 2-4 agroforestry products identified for potential marketing	
		National action plan for scaling up of agroforestry discussed, consensus built and resources for implementation identified	
<b>Comments (on level of achievement at closure stage) and follow-up action to be taken</b>	Only the enhancement of fodder-based agroforestry products was realized. For other perennial species, however, the time span was too short; two nurseries are in operation		
	511 villagers received small-scale enterprise and marketing training and six agroforestry products were identified for marketing		
	Consensus built on national action plan, but resources not yet identified		
	NAFSAP project funding is required		
<b>Output 1</b>	Knowledge on the status of underutilized/abandoned agricultural land established		
	Indicators and Baseline	Target	Achieved
	Select geographical area for focus of project work; baseline conducted	Defined	Yes
	Inception workshop for project launch; baseline conducted	Defined	
	Baseline studies within the first month of the project and results shared; baseline conducted	Defined	
<b>Comments</b>	N/A		
<b>Activity 1.1</b>	Select geographical area (districts and villages) for focus of project work		
	<b>Achieved</b>	Yes	
<b>Activity 1.2</b>	<b>Comments</b>	Eight pilot sites selected	
	Prepare and conduct inception workshop for project launch		
<b>Activity 1.3</b>	<b>Achieved</b>	Yes	
	<b>Comments</b>	Baseline study, including GIS assessment, carried out; Series of six site consultation meetings conducted	
<b>Activity 1.4</b>	Conduct final workshop to share results and lessons learned		
	<b>Achieved</b>	Yes	
	<b>Comments</b>	Final lessons learned workshop was held and result was shared with more than 65 participants	

<b>Output 2</b>	Best bet agroforestry options to utilize abandoned/ underutilized agricultural land piloted		
	Indicators and Baseline	Target	Achieved
	Pilot test best bet agroforestry options and enterprises in the selected farm households' underutilized/abandoned agricultural land; case studies, review and consultation	Defined	Yes
Publish and share project results (main findings, experiences, conclusions and recommendations); case studies, review and consultation	Defined		
<b>Comments</b>	An integrated agroforestry system-based value chain report still needs to be developed, possibly in the next phase of the project		
<b>Activity 2.1</b>	Pilot test best bet agroforestry options and enterprises in the selected farm households' underutilized/abandoned agricultural land		
	Achieved	Yes	
	Comments	Best bet options were identified and pilot testing plots set up; Priority best bet options were selected for pilot testing; Individual households for pilot testing were selected; The project supported the establishment of two nurseries (one in each district); A potential business entrepreneur was identified for the promotion of agroforestry products	
<b>Activity 2.2</b>	Publish and share project results (main findings, experiences, conclusions and recommendations)		
	Achieved		
	Comments		
<b>Output 3</b>	A National Action Plan for scaling up the utilization of underutilized/ abandoned agricultural land developed		
	Indicators and Baseline	Target	Achieved
	Prepare a National Action Plan for the utilization of underutilized/abandoned agricultural land; NAFSAP draft ready	Not defined	Partially
Formulate a project proposal to support the Government in scaling up the pilot project results across the country; NAFSAP draft ready	Not defined		
<b>Comments</b>	NAFSAP implementation proposal needs the Government's endorsement and implementation proposal will be shared with MOFE and donors for funding		
<b>Activity 3.1</b>	Prepare a National Action Plan for the utilization of underutilized/abandoned agricultural land		
	Achieved	Yes	
	Comments	NAFSAP draft was developed and shared among various individuals and organization; Feedback from various agencies was incorporated	
<b>Activity 3.2</b>	Formulate a project proposal to support the Government in scaling up the pilot project results across the country		
	Achieved	Yes	
	Comments	Proposal (draft) for implementation of NAFSAP is ready and circulated within FAO and ICs	

Awareness-raising and capacity-building programmes for concerned stakeholders on the promotion and adoption of agroforestry options and enterprises through the use of underutilized/abandoned agriculture land planned and executed, and project results/experiences shared			
Indicators and Baseline		Target	Achieved
<b>Output 4</b>	Plan and carry out awareness-raising activities on the underutilized/abandoned agricultural land for target audiences and the general public; experienced and trained farmers in agroforestry were available outside the project		Not defined
	Conduct capacity-building needs assessment of farm households, government organizations, NGOs, authorities responsible for tenure issues and business entrepreneurs; experienced and trained farmers in agroforestry were available outside the project		Not defined
	Develop capacity-building materials; experienced and trained farmers in agroforestry were available outside the project		Not defined
	Organize and conduct Training of Trainers for the people who will be involved in the capacity-building of the farm households in the project districts; experienced and trained farmers in agroforestry were available outside the project		Not defined
	Plan and execute capacity-building activities of farm households in the project pilot sites; experienced and trained farmers in agroforestry were available outside the project		Not defined
	Document key project learning, experiences and results and communicate widely to people within and outside the project districts, across Nepal and beyond; experienced and trained farmers in agroforestry were available outside the project		Not defined
<b>Comments</b>	English-language version for trainers at higher level needs to be translated for wider dissemination in the next phase of the project		
<b>Activity 4.1</b>	Plan and carry out awareness-raising activities on the underutilized/abandoned agricultural land for target audiences and the general public		
	<b>Achieved</b>	Yes	
	<b>Comments</b>	Eight site-specific best bet agroforestry promotion trainings were held; Market analysis and development training was organized for eight farmers' groups; Video and documentary film on reutilization of abandoned agriculture land was prepared and shared in a number of meetings and training sessions	
<b>Activity 4.2</b>	Conduct capacity-building needs assessment of farm households, government organizations, NGOs, authorities responsible for tenure issues and business entrepreneurs		
	<b>Achieved</b>	Yes	
	<b>Comments</b>		
<b>Activity 4.3</b>	Develop capacity-building materials		
	<b>Achieved</b>	Yes	
	<b>Comments</b>		
<b>Activity 4.4</b>	Organize and conduct Training of Trainers for the people who will be involved in the capacity-building of the farm households in the project districts		
	<b>Achieved</b>	Yes	
	<b>Comments</b>	Two training of trainers (best bet agroforestry and tenure system) were organized at national level; TOT manual was prepared and distributed among farming communities	
<b>Activity 4.5</b>	Plan and execute capacity-building activities of farm households in the project pilot sites		
	<b>Achieved</b>		
	<b>Comments</b>		
<b>Activity 4.6</b>	Document key project learning, experiences and results and communicate widely to people within and outside the project districts, across Nepal and beyond		
	<b>Achieved</b>		
	<b>Comments</b>		

Marketing, Outreach and Reporting Unit,  
Resource Mobilization Division (TCR)

For more information please contact: [Reporting@fao.org](mailto:Reporting@fao.org)