

“Challenges of Land Use in Nepal and Way forward “

Nepal is a land-locked country located between big nations India and China. More than 70 percent of total 27 million people in Nepal are directly or indirectly dependent on land as their basic means of livelihood. However, lack of farm commercialization has limited the contribution of agriculture at one-third of the total Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of the country. One of the many more challenges in macroeconomic field /area facing by our country is land management at a current political unrest situation. Due to the political liquid and translational period, neither our country has been able to increase GDP as the government expected nor, Government has made progress in agriculture business, tourism sector, industrial situation, monetary policy and investment policy.

The scarce land in Nepal has been threatened from different phenomenon. Issue of land has been always a political issue in Nepal as more than 50,000-100,000 people are still landless and different political parties are using them as a ‘vote bank’ in every election for parliaments to local bodies. On the other hand increasing population, land slide, soil erosion and rapidly growing urbanization across the country have posed a huge challenge to the management of land in the tiny Himalayan nation-- Nepal. Land in the hilly remote areas are increasingly becoming fallow and deserted due to rapid migration to urban areas where land is also under growing pressure of over population which has ultimately led to the encroachment of public land to shrinkage of arable land on the back of increasing urbanization and development of development infrastructure.

Squeezing volume of land due to above mentioned reasons has emerged as the threats to not only land management but also the food security in Nepal which , despite the agricultural country, is still dependent on import of food from neighboring India to fulfill supply deficit amid growing demands for food.

Increasing migration of youths from rural farm land to urban areas within the countries and international labor destinations is another challenge in managing the land for agriculture commercialization in the country. Despite the fact, there were rafts of measures were taken through polices and laws to ensure the proper land management in Nepal, scientific land use is still far cry.

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

Though history of land management in Nepal dates back to some two hundreds years back, government initiation to manage the land on the basis of its utility is not so old. In 1853, then King of Nepal Surendra Shah had tried to encourage people to properly use land so as to promote local agriculture production. Land Survey Act 1962, Civil Code 1963, Land Act 1964, Land Administration Act 1968 and Land Revenue Act 1978 are the major government initiations to put effective data base of land, encourage people to cultivate new arable land and to collect more land revenue. However, those acts failed to address the issues relating to proper utilization and management of land.

The government had categorized the land into Abbal, Doyam, Sima and Chahar as per the agriculture fertility and use, until the year 2000. Then the government initiated the practice to

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categorize land into agriculture land, commercial land and housing land for specialized use of land. The 5th amendment of Land Act 1964 in 2001 made the provisions of constituting Land-use Council, classification of land on the basis of use, restriction of use of the same land for dual purposes and discouraging of fragmentation of land.

As per the fresh government data, cultivable land in Nepal covers 27 percent of the total land where as forest , pasture , snow covered area and water area constitute 39.6 percent, 12 percent, 17.2 percent and 2.6 percent areas respectively. However, government lacks specific policy and programs to properly use these resources. It is high time for the government to come up with the land use programs to utilize the land on the basis of nature of soil, fertility, geographical situation, environment and climate as per the existing act.

Even the policy introduced in 2010 by the government to classified the land into different categories on the basis of utility of land, has not yet be implemented. The policy had envisaged to control the urbanization destroying farm land, allocate separate land for industrial purpose and discourage the people to leave fallow land.

Keeping in view the increasing challenges on land management, the government has this year formulated ‘National Land Use Policy 2012 to introduce the scientific use of land so as to ensure the maximum utilization of land on sustainable manner.

As per the policy, land could be used for seven purposes: agriculture, residential, commercial, industrial, forest, public and other purposes as deemed necessary. The policy is regarded as the major breakthrough in scientific utilization of land given the haphazard use of lands without any proper planning. The policy has envisaged to discourage to leaving fallow land without cultivation, protect 40 percent of land for forest, discourage uncontrolled fragmentation of land, managed development of housing maintaining the balance between environment and urbanization, proper protection of land with historical, religious, tourist and cultural importance as well as to encourage maximum use of land for agriculture purpose.

CURRENT EFFORTS ON LAND MANAGEMENT

Despite long running political instability in the country, Nepal has come up with the Land Use Policy, 2012 that has tried to manage the land with scientific way to ensure better and sustainable utilization of land. Success or failure of the policy depends on the seriousness of the government to execute the policy as per its letter and spirit so that our existing land could be utilized on balanced way for specified purposes envisaged in the policy.

WAY-OUTS

The government should implement the land use policy by enacting related laws that support the scientific land management initiations from the government. The government has to encourage farm commercialization gradually shifting from widely traditionally farming methods to as to support in restoring food security within the country lessening increasing dependence on imports to stabilize food supply. In a bid to lessen the concentration of population in urban areas, the government has to

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create job opportunities to rural youths or encourage them into the agro farming to retain them in the hilly areas that are also potential in commercial farming. Amid limited government resource for the investment in agriculture, the government has to mobilize the non-governmental organizations and ask international donors to expand farm commercialization and implement the scientific land use system in the country. The government has to discourage human settlement in fertile land so as to lessen the threat of food scarcity in the country.

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