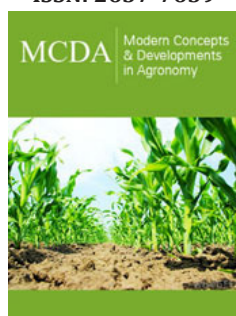


Commercial Vegetable Farming as a Tool for Poverty Alleviation for Small-Holder Farmers in Nepal

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Introduction

The study titled “Commercial Vegetable Farming: An Effective Approach for Poverty Alleviation in Nepal” highlights the transformative role of the PRISM (Prosperity Realization through Irrigation and Smallholder Markets) approach in shifting subsistence farming towards commercial vegetable production. PRISM approach is a unique market-oriented approach to rural economic- prosperity, developed and implemented by an International Organization called International Development Enterprises (IDE International). It is a set of tools used in understanding the unique situation of the rural poor and to create sustainable solutions to rural poverty. It focusses mainly on market-oriented interventions by creating networks of small enterprises to provide agricultural supplies needed by the poor farmers, working with farmers to improve small farm productivity and linking small farm families to markets for effective and sustainable poverty reduction.

The research, conducted in Kapilbastu and Kaski districts of Nepal, presents empirical evidence supporting the argument that structured intervention, technology adoption, and market linkages significantly enhance farmers’ income, leading to poverty reduction. This review critically examines the study’s findings and presents an opinion on its broader implications.

Key Findings and Analysis

The research provides robust quantitative data illustrating a substantial increase in land area under vegetable cultivation, yield improvements, and net income growth. Specifically, land under vegetable farming expanded six-fold in Kaski and twelvefold in Kapilbastu, demonstrating the effectiveness of PRISM’s market-oriented intervention. Additionally, the study reveals a transition from sporadic vegetable farming on fallow land to year-round commercial production, which significantly contributed to household income growth-rising from NPR 1166.69 to NPR 25,240.6 in Kaski and from NPR 4,451.75 to NPR 20,425.4 in Kapilbastu. On an average, the net increase in household income of the surveyed area from the sale of vegetable is from Nepali Rupies 1635.98(NPR) to Nepali Rupies 22451.8. (NPR). The research also emphasizes gendered labor dynamics, noting an increased employment of both male and female labor, with a higher number of female workers engaged in commercial vegetable production. However, persistent wage disparities remain an issue, as male workers earned 28% more than their female counterparts.

A critical component of success in this model is access to organized markets. The PRISM approach facilitated marketing networks, reducing farmers’ dependency on intermediaries and enabling direct market participation. This resulted in better pricing and increased profitability.

Opinion and Broader Implications

The study effectively demonstrates that targeted interventions in smallholder farming can yield substantial economic benefits, reinforcing the argument that commercial vegetable farming is a viable strategy for poverty alleviation in Nepal. The documented increases in yield, market access, and income support the viability of structured agricultural commercialization models. However, several challenges must be addressed to sustain and scale up these benefits:

Market stability and price fluctuations

While increased production benefits farmers, oversupply can lead to price drops, reducing profitability. Mechanisms such as cooperative-based pricing or government intervention in price stabilization could be explored.

Gender wage gap

The persistence of wage disparities underscores the need for policy measures promoting equitable compensation and empowering women farmers with training and access to resources.

Climate resilience

The impact of seasonal variability, particularly monsoon-related risks, requires adaptive strategies such as improved and micro-irrigation technologies suitable and appropriate for small holders, crop diversification, and climate-resilient farming techniques.

Conclusion

The findings of this study align with global trends in agricultural commercialization as a poverty alleviation strategy. The PRISM approach presents a replicable model for other regions in Nepal and similar agrarian economies. However, to ensure long-term sustainability, stakeholders, including government agencies, NGOs, and farmer cooperatives-must collaboratively address the identified challenges. With continued investment in infrastructure, training, and market access, commercial vegetable farming can serve as a cornerstone for rural economic development in Nepal [1].

References

1. Bhimsen Gurung, PP Regmi, RB Thapa, Gautam DM, Thapa RB, et al. (2016) Commercial vegetable farming: an approach for Poverty reduction in Nepal. *Agronomy Journal of Nepal* 4: 92-106.