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Buffalo Production: A Prosperous Enterprise to Empower Women Farmers and to Sustain Subsistence Farming

LILA KARKI¹, SIEGFRIED BAUER¹, UMA KARKI²

¹*Justus-Liebig-University Giessen, Institute of Agriculture and Food Systems Management, Germany*

²*Auburn University, College of Agriculture, USA*

Abstract

Livestock is a paramount component in Nepalese agricultural system. Its economic contribution to rural households (28.5%), agricultural sector (31.5%), and national economy (18%) is in increasing trend. However, the share of animal products in Nepalese dietary energy supply is merely 7.5%. Buffalo contributes 69% and 64% to the total milk and meat production respectively. Besides, manure and draft power have been two key outputs that buffalo provides to maintain the soil fertility and agricultural operations, where chemical fertiliser and mechanisation have not often been practised. However, buffalo production has not yet been accorded top priority in the livestock sector. The study was conducted in the mid hills of Nepal. The field data were collected applying multi-stage random sampling technique. The collected data have been analysed using descriptive statistics, econometric models, and qualitative tools. Additionally, annual compound growth rate of buffalo population and their production and factor productivity have been analyzed. The model results reveal high possibility to increase factor productivity by utilising the available farm resources optimally. The highest economic contribution of buffalo to all other farm animals (cow, goat, sheep, poultry) underpins its production potentialities in livestock based farming system. The involvement of women in production and marketing activities also analyzed. The significant involvement of women in raising buffalo activity opens possibilities of empowering them through human capacity development and income generating prospects. The socio-economic contribution of this enterprise to the rural households can further be increased substantially if farmers are made aware of the concept comparative advantage and motivate them accordingly. Simultaneously, government have to provide farmers with some other strategic interventions in order them to facilitate applying modern buffalo technology, enhance their technical and managerial capacity and constant support on diversifying the products to ease marketing.

Keywords: Buffalo enterprise, factor productivity, rural economy, women empowerment