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“Reconcile land system changes
with planetary health”

Agroecological practices in home and kitchen garden for food and nutrition security

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Abstract

Nepal is characterised by high biodiversity, cultural diversity, and sharp contrasts in development. The remote western municipalities of Barekot and Raskot are among the poorest regions, where agriculture plays a central role for subsistence and regional development efforts. The Agroecology project of Helvetas, Fastenaktion, and SAHAS Nepal targets food and nutrition security (FNS) for marginalised groups, particularly women and those from the lowest caste. While home and kitchen gardens and agroecological practices offer promising approaches to enhance FNS, their application and scalability in these areas remain underexplored. This study, conducted in the framework of the first phase of the “Improving Food Security and Nutrition of Smallholder Farmers through an Agroecological Approach” (IFNS) project, explores the contextual realities of poor and marginalised women in Raskot and Barekot, examines the agroecological practices implemented in home gardens, and evaluates their contribution to improving FNS. Furthermore, it provides recommendations for strengthening the next project phase.

A mixed-methods approach was used, including literature review, two transect walks, three focus group discussions, 13 key-informant interviews, a survey with 47 respondents, and two non-participatory observations. Quantitative data were analysed with Excel, qualitative data with Miner Lite.

Results show systemic inequities, weak municipal capacities, and economic fragility among the poor and marginalised women. Subsistence farming and remittances dominate livelihoods, while poor infrastructure and NGO reliance prevail. Initiatives like IFNS enhanced governance participation and resilience. Twenty-six agroecological practices were identified, with 14 practices adopted by all respondents. Key benefits related to crop protection (n=14), water management (n=12), and yields (n=12), strengthening FNS and resilience. Home garden diversity plays a vital role in improving diets and food security. Recommendations include intensifying existing agroecological practices, enhancing women’s empowerment, strengthening municipal-NGO-private collaboration, establishing community learning centers, and promoting entrepreneurship.

Future research should analyse household food consumption, include non-project participants, and explore broader agroecological scaling opportunities using system-based approaches and tools like TAPE.

Keywords: Agroecological practices, food and nutritional security, home and kitchen garden, Nepal, poor and marginalised women