



Feed the Future Country Fact Sheet

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Collaboration across Sectors Strengthens Communities and Food Security in Nepal



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A common Nepalese saying, “*Khayo Makai, Nakhayo Bhokai*,” or “If there is no maize, there is nothing to eat,” often holds true for people living in the hilly regions of Nepal. Maize is the second most important food crop in the country after rice. For the majority of Nepalis living in the hills, maize cultivation is a traditional livelihood passed down through generations, and corn flour is used to make staple foods like *dhedo* and *roti*, two traditional breads in the region.

But while maize grown in the hills of Nepal makes up about a quarter of the national food grain supply, smallholder farmers struggle to meet demand for this important staple crop. They face a difficult terrain, climatic risks, and limited access to new information and technology that could help improve low and poor-quality yields. As a result, many families in rural Nepal endure chronic poverty, hunger and undernutrition.

Feed the Future is working in partnership with a network of government, research, NGO and community stakeholders in Nepal to equip smallholder farmers with the knowledge and tools they need to sustainably boost maize quality and production. A Feed the Future program managed by USAID and co-financed by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation focuses on 20 remote hill districts of Nepal and aims to improve food security and increase household incomes for 50,000 rural families.

One critical way the program is achieving its objectives is by supporting the development of community-based seed production groups in all 20 target districts. These groups benefit from groundbreaking agricultural research on high-yield, climate-resilient maize varieties conducted by national Nepali research centers supported by Feed the Future. Nepal’s district agricultural development offices disseminate these new varieties to local NGO partners, who then work directly with local farmers and community groups to plant improved seeds and implement better crop management techniques.

The program also empowers farmers to produce the improved seed varieties themselves over the long term, helping to build sustainable local seed markets. The community groups receive training on all aspects of seed production, from field inspection to certification and post-harvest management. To date, the program has improved the capacity of 207 community-based seed production groups, 31 of which are in the process of graduating into cooperatives, and several groups have even grown to become full-fledged private seed companies.

Dhal Bahadur Bhandari, a farmer from Nepal’s Sindhupalchowk district, is now the coordinator of Hariyali Community Seed Private Company Limited, which started out as a community-based seed production group supported under Feed the Future. The company now produces, processes, packages and sells improved seeds across local and regional markets, providing

services to about 1,800 people.

“Initially, due to lack of awareness, farmers would hesitate to purchase locally grown seeds. But after the successful harvest of the first crop, they slowly started adopting these new maize varieties and technologies. Thanks to the improved seeds, the farmers of Sindhupalchowk district are now producing four metric tons of maize per hectare compared to 1.7 metric tons earlier,” Bhandari says proudly. “Our combined efforts have already started bearing fruit. It has improved the living standards of thousands of farmers and their families. Their children are going to school and most of them are food-secure.”

As a result of this support under Feed the Future and its programs, the target districts in Nepal have produced a cumulative 3,000 metric tons of maize seed, generating nearly one million dollars in sales. To date, maize yields in Nepal have grown by 36 percent, leading to improved livelihoods and better nutrition among rural households in particular.

These visible impacts on food security led Nepal’s Ministry of Agricultural Development to design a new maize seed improvement effort of its own modeled on the success of the Feed the Future program. As a result, the Government of Nepal will invest \$650,000 in 19 other hill districts starting this year, providing subsidies and technical assistance to farmers for improved maize seed production.