



## Feed the Future Country Fact Sheet

Online Version: <https://www.feedthefuture.gov/article/aquaculture-helps-women-nepal-improve-household-nutrition>

# Aquaculture Helps Women in Nepal Improve Household Nutrition



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Showing off the first fish harvest from a Feed the Future-sponsored small-scale aquaculture project in Nepal.

In rural Nepal, widespread poverty is compounded by the lack of access to high-quality, nutritious foods. According to a recent report from the Nepal Demographic Health Survey, 41 percent of children under the age of five are chronically malnourished, and anemia is a significant problem, afflicting 47 percent of children and 36 percent of women.

One approach to mitigate the spread of anemia and to improve the overall health of rural Nepalese is to supplement their diets with vitamin-rich protein sources, such as fish. Researchers from Nepal's Agriculture and Forestry University (AFU) recognized the potential of aquaculture to help address this widespread nutritional deficit, and their recent effort in Nepal successfully established more than 70 family-run fishponds, all managed by women. In the first year of operation, the ponds produced over 500 kg of fish for household consumption.

Now, the [Feed the Future Innovation Lab for Collaborative Research on Aquaculture and Fisheries](#), headquartered at Oregon State University, is bringing together scientists from the AFU and the University of Michigan to build on the initial success of the AFU program. This collaborative research effort will continue to empower women using small-scale aquaculture to supplement their livelihoods and as a tool to promote food security.

Jim Diana, one of the researchers with the Innovation Lab, says that family-scale aquaculture is particularly advantageous for women in these regions, since women are typically responsible for household meals.

"Women live in rural households with their families throughout the year, while their husbands often must leave for work opportunities", says Diana. "The ponds provide families with a ready supply of quality food, resulting in four to five times more fish consumption than families without ponds."

Researchers intend to train more women in effective aquaculture techniques by establishing women's groups to educate rural Nepalese on fish farming practices and the nutritional benefits associated with household fish production.

One of the challenges of bringing new practices to rural women in Nepal is that more than half of them are illiterate and cannot be reached through traditional methods such as distributing written materials. Instead, researchers from the Innovation Lab employ an in-person extension approach, partnering with four Nepalese schools to construct schoolhouse fishponds that will be used in conjunction with workshops to provide a hands-on educational experience in small-scale aquaculture to members of the local community. Extension services like these are a core component of Feed the Future's

approach to agricultural development across focus countries.

The schoolhouse ponds will be used to cultivate both carp and tilapia, and will be managed by students and teachers at the schools under the supervision of Innovation Lab researchers from AFU. Regular trainings will be offered to students, teachers and women's fish farming groups to cover all aspects of aquaculture, from pond construction and management to marketing and nutritional education, including tips on how to prepare and cook the fish.

By empowering rural women to grow and consume fish from their own backyards, Feed the Future is giving them the means to combat the daunting threats of anemia and undernutrition in their households. Better access to more diverse food sources means Nepalese families the chance to increase their resilience and food security in some of the country's most remote corners.

*The Feed the Future Innovation Lab for Collaborative Research on Fisheries and Aquaculture seeks to enrich livelihoods and promote health by cultivating international, multidisciplinary partnerships that advance science, research, education and outreach in aquatic resources.*