



Feed the Future Country Fact Sheet

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Working with the Private Sector in Nepal to Promote a Friendly Fungus



Sulav Paudel

An Agricare employee (left) aids a farmer (right) in mixing *Trichoderma* fungus into her soil. Rabin Adhikari has big ideas for Nepal. “I see a Nepal with thriving local businesses that help smallholder farmers produce better crops organically,” he says.

Adhikari is the CEO of Agricare Nepal, a private firm that makes biopesticides and biomedicine products used in agricultural and veterinary practice. When the Feed the Future Innovation Lab for Integrated Pest Management, led by the Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University (Virginia Tech), wanted to promote the use of the beneficial fungus *Trichoderma* as a biocontrol agent in Nepal, Adhikari jumped at the chance to get involved and offered space at his office in Nepal’s south central town of Bharatpur to host international researchers and practitioners who are collaborating on this topic.

In June 2014, 48 scientists, professors and extension agents from six different countries – Nepal, India, Bangladesh, Cambodia, Honduras and Indonesia – gathered at the Agricare facility to learn about how *Trichoderma* can be produced and deployed as an important component of integrated pest management.

Dr. Muni Muniappan, who directs the Integrated Pest Management Innovation Lab at Virginia Tech, says, “The goal was for participants to gain practical knowledge of the uses of *Trichoderma* as a biocontrol agent, particularly with regard to sustainable agriculture and environmental protection.”

In developing countries, chemical pesticides are often used indiscriminately, causing environmental damage and creating health concerns. Integrated pest management aims to mitigate this problem through an environmentally sensitive approach to pest control that can help farmers protect crops while limiting the use of synthetic pesticides. A naturally occurring fungus like *Trichoderma*, which kills off pathogens that attack the roots of plants, can increase agricultural production without jeopardizing the environment or human health.

Private firms like Agricare are essential to getting integrated pest management solutions into the market and making them widely available to smallholder farmers. The Innovation Lab has also worked with Agricare to increase the number and quality of its bioproducts. “We want to help privatize technology so that these beneficial practices will be self-sustaining when we leave,” Muniappan says.

Adhikari concurs. “I have learned so much from the collaboration,” he says. “The chance to network with other professionals in the field from around the world was invaluable. I hope we can continue to work together.”