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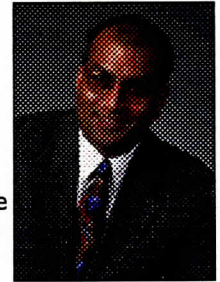
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### Agricultural Sustainability and Environmental Quality- a Political Concern?

**Dr. Durga Dutta Poudel**

University of Louisiana at Lafayette, USA, July 20, 2004



Environmental changes and crises resulting in food shortages are not uncommon for a country like Nepal where nearly twenty five million people live in a very fragile agro-ecological environment. Because a growing population will place increased pressure on the environment, immediate actions on sustainable agriculture and environmental quality are necessary to minimize the potential impact of future crises. A real challenge for Nepalese politicians and scientists is to develop and implement appropriate agricultural policies and programs that enhance resource conservation, agricultural sustainability and environmental quality. As evidence of damage from decades of chemical-based industrial agricultural grows, western countries have now realized that organic, integrated, local resource-based agricultural systems are necessary for long-term sustainability, environmental quality, and human health. In Nepal where most agricultural systems still are either organic/low-input or integrated there exists a tremendous opportunity for Nepalese policy makers and scientists to better understand their existing indigenous agricultural systems and modify those systems in ways that enhance agricultural sustainability, environmental quality and profitability of these proven techniques. In some countries native systems have disappeared with the introduction of chemical intensive agriculture. These countries now depend on foreign corporations for their food supply. Outside technologies could be counterproductive if they are not introduced with a thorough understanding of their effects on the native systems. Negative impacts of external technologies are often realized only after years of use; by that time it may be too late to correct them. People often ask if it is possible to produce sufficient food for growing population without chemical fertilizers, pesticides, and industrial agriculture. Research from around the world has shown that organic agricultural systems can be just as productive while also maintaining the natural resource base on which production depends. The ways in which such systems sustain resources for future use are too numerous to list. It should, however, be noted that it is very hard to reinstall these systems after years of environmental degradation has taken place. For a country to experience sustainable development, resource conservation and manpower development must occur in both rural and urban environments. Rural sustainable development policies and programs need to be developed with a good understanding of the region's natural resource-base, existing production systems, and population dynamics. Ongoing rural to urban migration trends (primarily due to the lack of infrastructure and inefficient government programs) and the resulting workforce shortage is a real threat to agricultural sustainability in rural areas. Unless appropriate resource conservation programs are developed and implemented in rural areas it will not be possible to develop a sustainable national

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