



## Editorial

This monitoring cycle is the period of major cereal harvest in Nepal, traditionally the season of plenty. Eight districts have seen a reduction of perhaps 10-20% in paddy yields, year-on-year, due to hailstones, monsoon delays, and collateral damage of the flooding earlier this year. Two districts have seen a reduction in maize yields, one insignificant, the other perhaps as much as 50 percent. The remaining 22 districts covered by WFP/VAM's Food Security Monitoring have enjoyed normal or augmented cereal yields (refer also to the Seasonal Calendar on p. 7).

Immediately post harvest, stocks tend to be adequate. The effect of the localized yield reductions on food security, which depends on more than production, will only become apparent in subsequent monitoring cycles. This cycle did not show up evidence of a general deterioration in food security in the districts and VDCs covered by WFP/VAM's Food Security Monitoring.

## Labor Migration Continues to Rise

The trend of gradually increasing rates of short-term labor migration, especially to India, discussed in Food Security Bulletin 5, continues throughout this cycle. Since labor migration is a potentially profitable livelihood strategy, that is not a cause for concern, in and of itself. Also, it is not clear at this stage what role, if any, the conflict plays in the increase. What is clear, however, is that India's capacity to absorb foreign labor is becoming increasingly significant thus to food security in rural Nepal. It would be of tremendous concern if that capacity was exhausted, or the option of migrating to India became unavailable.

## IDP Instead of Migrants Survey

The last Food Security Bulletin announced WFP/VAM's intention of carrying out an assessment of the character and extent of internal migration through redeploying eight of its Field Monitors to districts where their survey populations tend to migrate. However, in light of the continuing fluidity

of the situation in Nepal, it was decided to change the Monitors' brief to survey the location and characteristics of Internally Displaced Persons, if any, in the 11 districts of Kanchanpur, Kailali, Banke, Dang, Kapilbastu, Rupandehi, Nawalparasi, Chitwan, Kavre, Morang and Jhapa. The fieldwork of this special survey began on October 11. The first phase that covers rural and urbanized areas of the above districts ends on December 9. A second phase, which is meant to cover other major urban areas across the country, is tentatively scheduled for December 13 to January 31, 2005. Findings so far are not cause for concern but comprehensive coverage has yet to be achieved and the final analysis thereof is pending.

## WFP Activities in Bajhang Still Suspended

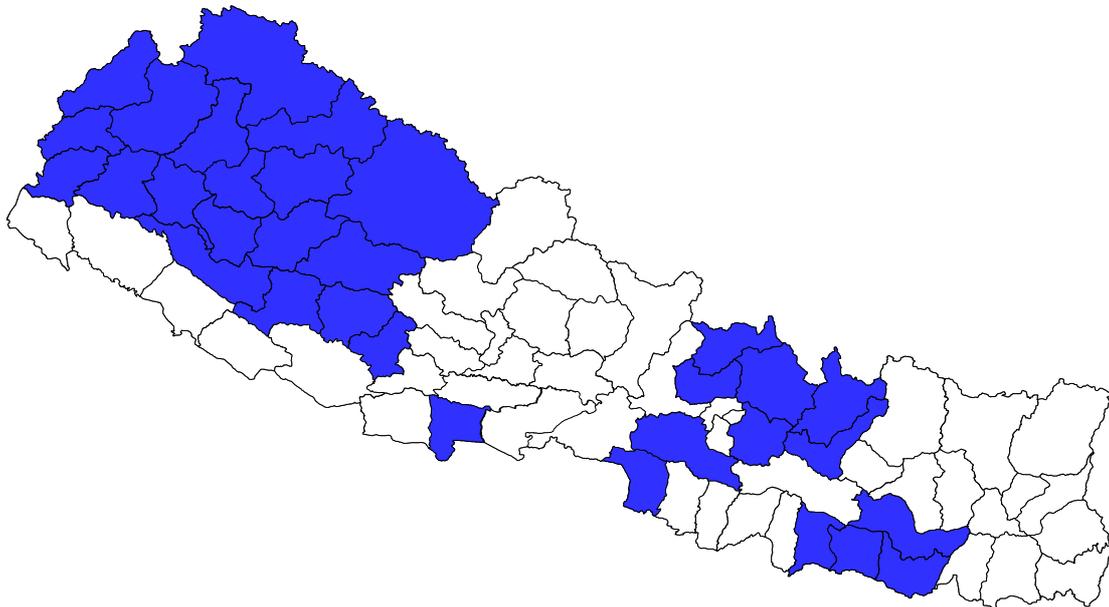
Following threats to its field staff in Bajhang district during the previous monitoring cycle, WFP support to the Food for Education and Rural Community Infrastructure Works programmes in Bajhang remain suspended.

World Food Programme monitors the food security situation in 32 Districts across Nepal. The Department for International Development (DFID) has funded the project since its October 2002 inception through a grant that expires in December 2006. The Vulnerability Analysis and Mapping (VAM) Unit in WFP manages the Field Surveillance Project

30 Field Monitors survey 32 Districts and 3 border points with India. 29 of them collect household and community data on food security in these 32 Districts. They conduct a total of 1,550 repeat household interviews, in 154 VDCs, during every two-month reporting cycle. In addition, each Monitor randomly selects 5-15 households to interview once in a cycle. The repeat households were selected through purposive sampling to represent vulnerable segments of the given population, for example, in terms of their physical isolation and limited landholding

Additionally, 1 Monitor is assigned to collect migration data at 3 main Terai border points with India. He checks official migration records against spot interviews with migrants as they cross the border. Notwithstanding the challenge of working in conflict-affected areas, the Field Monitors have managed to maintain an 80%+ success rate in completing planned interviews

Fig. 1 Districts where WFP/VAM Conducts Food Security Monitoring in Nepal



## General Profile of Randomly Selected Households Included in the Food Security Monitoring

This section complements the General Profile of Survey Communities published in Food Security Bulletin 5.

The backbone of WFP/VAM's Food Security Monitoring in Nepal is the 155 survey communities and 1,550 survey households that Field Monitors visit in 32 districts every two months. In any given cycle, however, each Monitor also seeks to collect data on 5-15 households that s/he selects randomly and never revisits. The objective is to verify that the survey households chosen for repeat interviews represent those most vulnerable to food insecurity in the district, and to cross reference the information given.

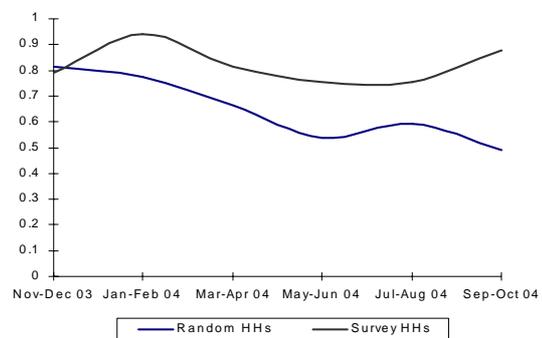
This section compares the past year, or six cycles, of random to survey household data. During this period, a total of 1,128 randomly selected households were included in the survey.

### Labour Migration

From November 2003 to October 2004, the rate of short-term labour migration tends to be lower among random than it is among survey households. The survey household rate lingers around 0.9 members per household throughout the six monitoring cycles. The rate for random households

decreases gradually from its November 2003 high of 0.9 to its current 0.5 members per household (Fig. 2).

Fig. 2 Member/HH on Short-term Labour Migration



### Primary Occupation

The three most significant occupations of the random households included in the past year's Food Security Monitoring were agriculture, wage labour, and caste-specific work, such as blacksmithing and tailoring, in that order of proportion. With around half of random households claiming agriculture as primary occupation, they are very similar in profile to the WFP/VAM repeat survey households. The two datasets also share the characteristic that most of the households whose primary occupation is wage labour are located in the Central and Eastern Regions.

### Landholding

In contrast to the 80% landless among survey households, only 18-27% of randomly selected households in the past six cycles own no land. Similarly, while just 1% of survey households own more than 1 ha of arable land, as much as 3-5% of random households do so.

### Cash Income

Although half of random households claim agriculture as their primary occupation, the sale of agricultural produce contributes little to their cash income. This would tend to imply that they produce very little and for their own consumption.

Wage labour income ranked high in their replies. Between 18 and 61% of the randomly selected households responded that wage labour represented more than 70% of their total cash income. The significance of wage labour was particularly pronounced in the Central and Eastern Regions in January-February and September-October this year. That supports the finding from the survey household data that the economies in these two Development Regions are more cash-wage oriented than anywhere else.

In the Mid-Western Region, as much as 40% of random households replied that petty trade or hawking and skilled labor rather than wage labour contributed more than 70% of total household income. In none of the regions, however, did more than 13% of the randomly selected households in the six monitoring cycles report contributions from remittances and portering to be significant. This data would appear to indicate that the randomly selected households represent a relatively better off strata than the survey households do insofar as they include more skilled and less menial labourers and rely less on remittances.

### Food Expenditures

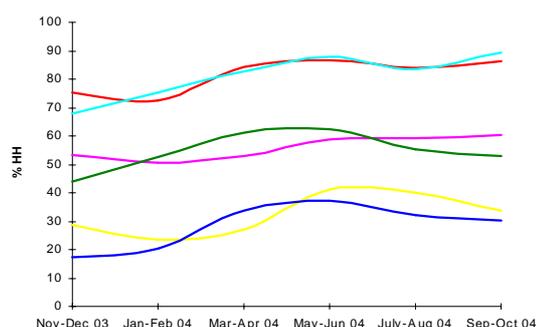
Nonetheless, among all the randomly selected households included in the six monitoring cycles, between 30-66% claimed that food items represented more than 70% of their expenses. And among the random households in the Central and Eastern Regions, the figure increased steadily from November 2003 through October 2004. Therefore, even if random households generally own more land and possess more professional skills than survey households do, the socio-economic distinction between them is not significant: Even the random segment includes a substantial proportion of poor.

### Coping Strategies

Defined as infrequent and hence excluding labor migration, coping strategies are useful indicators of vulnerability at household level. A comparison of some of the coping strategies that random and survey households have employed during the past year shows the two segments to have similar vulnerability profiles.

Across the five regions, and throughout the six monitoring cycles, the percentages of random and survey households that resort to the three characteristic coping strategies of eating less preferred foods, limiting food portions, or skipping whole meals are quite similar. In fact, the percentage of randomly selected households that employ either strategy exceed that of the repeat survey households at several points (Fig. 3).

Fig. 3 Comparison of Employed Coping Strategies



A point to be noted is that socio-economic distinctions in rural Nepal are a matter of degrees of poverty (in a sense encompassing far more than economic parameters). Nevertheless, within this arguably narrow range of poverty, it does appear that WFP/VAM includes the relatively worse off among its repeat survey households.

### Far Western Region Food Security September-October

Seven Monitors survey food security in the 7 Hill and Mountain districts of Achham, Baitadi, Bajhang, Bajura, Dadelhdura, Darchula and Doti

**Production.** This reporting cycle is the time of the paddy, maize, and millet harvest in the Far Western Region. The paddy yield is at normal levels with the exception of Achham where a

delayed monsoon and crop diseases have reduced it by perhaps as much as 10%. The maize harvest has been above normal everywhere except the parts of Baitadi that experience hailstones this season. The rest of the districts harvest 10-15% more maize this than last year, as do Darchula and Bajura. In the latter, respondents cite the use of chemical fertilizer and absence of feeding by wild animals as the principal reasons for the increased yields. In Bajhang and Dadeldhura, respondents estimate that year-on-year maize yields are up by as much as 25-60%.

**Price.** The consumer price of rice is at normal levels in all surveyed rural areas. The same applies to every district headquarter except in Bajura and Baitadi where respondents blame CPN(M) blockades and taxes for the 20-37% hike during this reporting cycle. Other locally produced foods, such as meat, fish, milk, ghee, curd, and soybean in Achham and Dadeldhura are marketed 20-50% below normal levels. Respondents claim that the reason is CPN(M) price fixing and that as a result they feel discouraged from producing these commodities. On the other hand, the CPN(M) reportedly requested traders in rural Darchula to maintain their prices at pre-monsoon levels throughout the rainy season precisely to forestall the customary hike in prices caused by the monsoon's obstruction of supply lines.

**Movement.** The mobility of people is unfettered by the conflict in Far Western Region; to some extent, the movement of commodities is not. In Baitadi, Dadeldhura, and Doti, the CPN(M) allegedly disallowed the transport of festive foodstuffs, such as goats, chicken, and ghee, to the district headquarters during the Dashain Festival. In Achham and Bajhang, the CPN(M) and HMG/N have restricted the movement of food commodities into and out of district headquarters, respectively for the past six months running. In Bajura, the blockade of district headquarters, analyzed in Food Security Bulletin 5, is lifted but respondents claim that in lieu thereof the CPN(M) has introduced an 8% tax on all deliveries and continues to block some altogether, at whim.

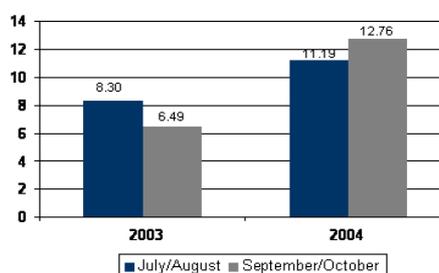
**Income.** This reporting period makes cash-income earning opportunities, such as weeding and harvesting, available to many wage laborers in the survey communities. In the absence of restrictions

on movement of people, some even work outside their own communities. On the other hand, villagers who count on marketing their goats, chicken, and ghee in Baitadi, Dadeldhura, and Doti district headquarters complain that this Dashain's restrictions on the movement of these goods diminished their earnings. Like previous reporting cycles, reports indicate that the CPN(M) taxes teachers and civil servants 5-8% of their salary.

**Migration.** The rate of short-term labor migration continues to increase in Far Western Region. The previous Food Security Bulletin discussed what appeared to be the increased significance of this livelihood strategy and evidence from this reporting cycle supports that contention.

Although this reporting cycle is the time of the Dashain Festival and harvest of major cereals, both of which tend to keep people at home and/or prompt migrants to visit, the percentage of out-migrants from the survey communities has risen by more than 1.5 percentage points to 12.76% (Fig. 4).

Fig. 4 Percentage of Short-term Out-migrants



Although the datasets are not immediately comparable, it is still instructive to compare the above finding to that of the last two National Censi. The 2001 Census reports that in the period of June-July 2.54% of the total population migrated to India. The previous census asserts that a decade earlier the rate is 3.18 percent<sup>1</sup>. With all the necessary caveats attached (including the fact that the 2001 Census failed to include 12 conflict-marked districts that WFP/VAM covers), it can be seen that the current rates of labor migration which WFP/VAM's Food Security Monitoring picks up are in the range of being significantly higher.

<sup>1</sup> Population Monograph of Nepal. HMG/N Central Bureau of Statistics, 2003

Given the generally profitable nature of labor migration, its increased popularity is not a cause for concern, in and of itself. Provided that the profit which returnees bring back to their communities offset any losses generated by their absence from the workforce, increased short-term labor migration is not necessarily an evil from a food security vantage point.

Albeit, as suggested in Food Security Bulletin 5, the increasingly conflict-affected environment in certain survey districts is not entirely unlikely to influence the flux of outmigration. For example, bus drivers and traders along main roads suggested that more youths than ever outmigrated during this monitoring cycle.

## Mid-Western and Western Regions Food Security, September-October

Fourteen Monitors survey food security in the 13 Mid-Western Hill and Mountain districts of Dailekh, Dolpa, Humla, Jajarkot, Jumla, Kalikot, Mugu, Pyuthan, Rolpa, Rukum, Salyan, and Surkhet in addition to the Western Terai district of Rupandehi, and migration patterns at 3 border points with India

**Production.** The greater part of the reporting cycle covers the harvest of paddy, maize, and millet, and other food crops, such as potato, in the Mid Western and Western Regions. And in several districts, harvesting continues well into November. Ten of the surveyed districts look set to enjoy good harvests of all crop types this year. The four exceptions are Jumla, Rupandehi, Jajarkot, and Pyuthan. In Jumla, the maize yield is reportedly down by 50% as a result of insufficient rains during the early growth stage. Also in Rupandehi, Jajarkot, and Pyuthan, this year's late transplantation of paddy, upon delays in the monsoon rains, is likely to diminish the harvest relative to last year. Furthermore, parts of Jumla have seen the CPN(M) establish co-operative farms where they supposedly expect villagers to contribute the labor. In other parts, CPN(M) allegedly ask villagers to hand over half of their production. Respondents claim that both moves have discouraged them from cultivating the low-productive land this year due to the extra time that they would require to do so.

**Price.** In ten of the fourteen surveyed districts, consumer prices of basic foodstuffs are at normal levels in both rural areas and district headquarters. The four exceptions are Humla, Jajarkot, Rolpa,

price fixing is behind the differential between hinterland and headquarter. A case in point is Surkhet where rice costs 12 Rs./kg in headquarters but only 8 Rs./kg in the rural areas. Similarly, mutton is traded at 130 Rs./kg in the villages but at 160 Rs./kg in the district headquarter. In Jajarkot, ghee sells for 100 Rs./kg in the rural areas but 160 Rs./kg in district headquarters. In Humla, locally grown foodstuffs generally trade at 10-20% below the district headquarter price. In every case the district headquarter price is normal for the time of the year. Producers are missing out because of what they claim is price fixing in rural markets and their lack of access to the district headquarter market. While this provides cheaper foods to the poor in the short run, it might discourage local production in the long run, in theory.

However, as the General Profile of Randomly Selected Households (p. 3) discusses, local production is primarily for own consumption and hence unaffected by fluctuations in market price. The food sold in the market is generally brought in from larger roadhead markets or directly from the Terai. Consequently, the traders and middle-men involved bear the whole brunt of price fixing measures. Yet, for example in Dolakha, they have been found to sidestep price fixing through selling their products surreptitiously outside the market and view of the CPN(M).

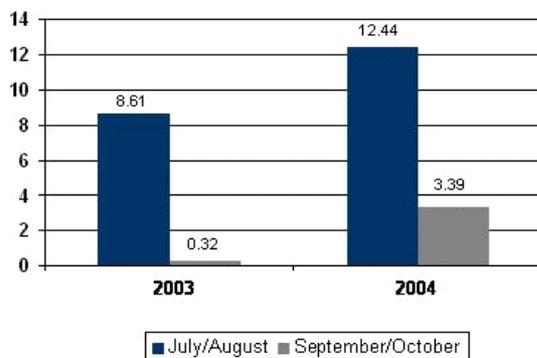
**Movement.** Whereas the movement of food commodities is entirely unrestricted in Dolpa, it is relatively so in nine of the other fourteen districts that WFP surveys. As a rule, the CPN(M) permits limited quantities to move into district headquarters against payment of applicable taxes and the district administration does likewise for movement in the other direction if proper permits have been obtained. However, narrative reports suggest that the rules are not always applied evenhandedly and that some commodity movement is barred at either party's whim. In the four remaining survey districts of Mugu, Humla, Surkhet, and Pyuthan, commodity movement is restricted systematically. In Mugu, the CPN(M) blockade of district headquarter applies to apples, potato, black gram, beans, ghee, and honey. In Humla, their restrictions apply to essential commodities, although potatoes, beans, and fuel wood are allowed in limited quantities, moving into headquarters. In Surkhet and Pyuthan, the restrictions are less pronounced

and applied by the district administration that limits the movement of commercial items, such as rice, noodles, and biscuits, to the interior. The movement of people is only restricted in Rukum, Rolpa, and Dailekh where even village-to-village movement is affected and respondents complain that this limits their wage labor opportunities considerably.

**Income.** In Humla and Mugu, reports that low-income households have to donate cash crops that they would otherwise have sold at a profit to the CPN(M) are of concern. The loss of even a small income might reduce their consumption level significantly. Rolpa-based migrants headed to India reportedly have to deposit 35,000 Rs. with the CPN(M) before departure. In Salyan, the claim is that they pay 100 Rs. for India and 5,000 Rs. for third countries. More than anything, advance payment requirements limit this opportunity to those who can afford it – on top of the cost of the journey itself. In all fourteen districts, as during previous reporting cycles, reports indicate that the CPN(M) taxes teachers and civil servants 5-8% of their salary.

**Migration.** In contrast to Far Western and Central and Eastern Regions, the rate of short-term labor migration has decreased sharply in the Mid Western and Western Regions. The percentage of out-migrants from the survey communities is down more than nine percentage points, from 12.44 to 3.39. Such a sharp decrease is exactly what one would expect during the Dashain Festival and major cereals harvest (Fig. 5).

Fig. 5 Percentage of Short-term Out-migrants



## Central and Eastern Regions Food Security, September-October

Nine Monitors survey food security in the 12 Mountain, Hill and Terai districts of Dhanusha, Dolakha, Kavre, Makwanpur, Nuwakot, Parsa, Ramechhap, Rasuwa, Saptari, Sindhupalchok, Siraha, and Udaypur.

**Production.** The greater part of the reporting cycle covers the harvest of principal crops, such as paddy and maize, in the Central and Eastern Regions. As reported in previous bulletins, Saptari, Siraha, Udaypur and Sindhupalchok districts are badly affected by floods, landslides, crop diseases and erratic rainfall and, as a consequence, harvested an estimated 10-20% less paddy this year compared to last year. In contrast, in the hill and mountain districts of Dolakha, Nuwakot, Ramechhap, and Rasuwa, good rains increased maize yields over last year's harvest. In the remaining four surveyed districts, food availability appears to be normal.

**Price.** In Dolakha and Ramechhap, some commodities, such as ginger and livestock, have seen a 5-10% price increase. Respondents cite CPN(M) tax as the reason. The consumer price of wheat is up by about 5% over last year. Given the unsatisfactory harvest, reported in Food Security Bulletin 4, that is hardly surprising. Otherwise, both consumer and retail prices are at normal levels in the Central and Eastern Regions.

**Movement.** In Dolakha and Sindhupalchok, the CPN(M) reportedly taxes commercial commodities, including livestock, to the effect of limiting their movement to some, albeit not a comparatively great, extent. In Dolakha, traders have to pay 50 Rs. per goat or sheep and 500 Rs. per buffalo or larger head of livestock that they wish to take to market. In Sindhupalchok, truckers are supposedly paying 300 Rs. to CPN(M) for every transport of commercial goods to the district interior. In the eleven other survey districts, restrictions on commodity movement do not apply. In none of the twelve districts are there restrictions on the mobility of people. However, in Dolakha, tourists appear to be disallowed by the CPN(M).

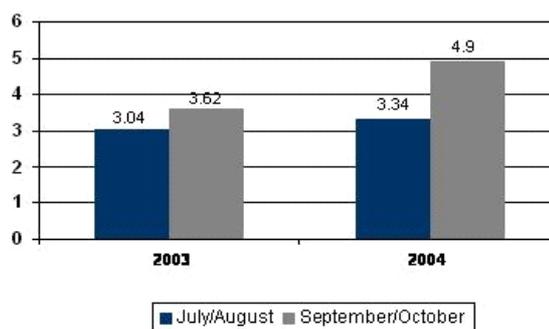
**Income.** The Central and Eastern Regions offer more wage labor opportunities than the other regions in Nepal do. Also the sale of milk and milk

products near the regions' busy highways are important means of making cash income. Only the labor markets in the three districts of Saptari, Siraha, and Dolakha have been affected by the conflict. In Saptari and Siraha, bandhs called by the CPN(M) or other parties have limited movement and closed work places. In Dolakha, the CPN(M) reportedly stopped villagers from collecting sand and gravel from the river and the ban on tourism limits porters' income opportunities significantly. Like previous reporting cycles, reports indicate that the CPN(M) taxes teachers and civil servants, yet in Central and Eastern Regions this practice appears to be applied more erratically and leniently than in the other three regions.

**Migration.** The rate of short-term labor migration continues to increase in Central and Eastern Regions. It is still at the lowest level of the five Development Regions but it is nonetheless significant that it has increased by more than 1.5

percentage point during the time of the Dashain Festival and harvest of major cereals where people tend to stay at home or return from short-term migration (Fig. 6). Here also, it is the increasing proportion of youths that characterize the migration trend which is further bolstered by

Fig. 6 Percentage of Short-term Out-migrants



victims from the flooding in Dhanusha, Saptari and Siraha earlier this year.

## Seasonal Calendar

Region		Rice		Wheat		Maize		Millet		Barley		Potato	
		Planting	Harvesting	Planting	Harvesting	Planting	Harvesting	Planting	Harvesting	Planting	Harvesting	Planting	Harvesting
Eastern	Mountain	May -Jul	Oct - Dec	Nov - Jan	3rd week Mar-May	Dec-Apr	Jun - Sep	May - Jul	Oct - Dec	Oct - Nov	Mar - Apr	Dec - Feb	Jun - Aug
	Hill	May -Aug	Sep - Dec	Oct - Jan	Feb -May	May -Sept	Oct - Dec	May - Aug	Oct - Dec	Sep - Nov	May - Jul	Dec - Mar	June - Aug
	Terai	Apr -Aug	Oct - Nov	Sep - Dec	Mar - May	Apr - Jun	Jul - Sep	May - Jul	Sep - Nov	Sep - Nov	Apr - Jun	Summer Feb - Apr Winter Oct - Dec	Summer Jul - Sep Winter Feb - Apr
Central	Mountain	May -Aug	Oct - Dec	Oct - Dec	Mar - Jun	Feb - Jun	Aug -Nov	Jun - July	Oct - Jan	Oct - Dec	Apr - Jun	Mar - Jun	Aug - Oct
	Hill	May -Aug	Oct - Dec	Oct - Dec	Mar - Jun	Apr - Jun	Jun - Sep	May - Jul	Oct - Jan	Oct - Dec	Mar - Jun	Jul -Sep	Dec - Feb
	Terai	May -Aug	Aug - Dec	Oct - Jan	Mar - May	Feb - May	May - Sep	NA	NA	NA	NA	Sep - Nov	Dec - Mar
Western	Mountain	NA	NA	Oct - Dec	May - Jul	Feb - Apr	Aug - Oct	Mar - May	Aug - Oct	Oct - Dec	May - July	Feb - May	Aug - Oct
	Hill	May -Aug	Sep - Dec	Oct - Dec	Mar - May	Feb - Jun	Jun - Sep	May - Sep	Sep - Dec	Sep - Jan	Feb - May	Oct - Feb	Jan - Jul
	Terai	May -Aug	Oct - Dec	Oct - Jan	Feb - Apr	Apr - Jul	Jul - Sep	Jun - Aug	Oct - Dec	NA	NA	Sep - Nov	Dec - Feb
Mid Western	Mountain	Mar - Jul	Oct - Dec	Oct - Jan	Apr - Aug	Mar - Jun	Aug - Oct	Mar - May	Oct - Nov	Oct - Jan	Apr - Aug	Feb - Jun	Jun - Nov
	Hill	May -Aug	Oct - Dec	Sep - Dec	Mar - May	Apr - Jun	Aug - Oct			Sep - Nov	Mar - May	Oct - Feb	Sep - Dec
	Terai	May -Jul	Oct -Dec	Oct - Dec	Feb - Apr	Apr - Jul	Aug - Oct	Oct - Dec	Feb - Apr	June -Jul	Sep -Nov	Sep - Nov	Dec - Feb
Far Western	Mountain	Apr -Jun	Aug - Oct	Oct - Dec	Apr - May	Mar - Jun	Jun - Oct	NA	NA	Oct - Dec	Mar - May	Oct - Apr	Apr - Aug
	Hill	May -Aug	Sep - Nov	Oct - Dec	Mar - May	Apr - Jul	Aug -Oct	May -Jul	Sep - Nov	Oct - Dec	Mar - May	Summer Jan - Apr Winter Sep-Nov	Summer Jun - Sep Winter Feb-Apr
	Terai	May -July	Sep - Nov	Oct - Dec	Feb - Apr	Summer May - Jul Winter Feb - Mar	Summer Aug - Sept Winter May - Jun	Jun - Aug	Oct - Dec	Oct - Dec	Feb - Apr	Sep - Nov	Dec - Feb

Source: HMG/N Department of Agriculture