



Editorial

This monitoring cycle is the traditional lean season in agricultural Nepal, and the participants in the WFP/VAM repeat survey deal with their low or exhausted food stocks through a range of livelihood strategies, from basket weaving to timber smuggling, as they have done before. This cycle's data shows no indications of extraordinary stress or coping strategies. The odd exception is the Dailekh VDCs from where people migrated to headquarters in protest against the CPN(M) last November and missed out on the winter crop season; they are dealing with the lean season without the benefit of any food stock. With few exceptions, local yield predictions for the upcoming winter harvest of wheat and barley are consistently upbeat. Good rainfall all around and convenient snow cover to keep crops moist at the early stages of planting in higher altitude areas explain that. In several districts, harvesting of both crops is in progress at the time of publication of this bulletin.

The data would appear to indicate that prices have risen year-on-year. That might be of concern if people purchase all their staple foods at these rates from the markets that WFP/VAM includes in this survey. However, not only do rates fluctuate greatly, but respondents also indicate that they source foodstuffs from whichever market has the lowest prices. And market price is not a standalone indicator of food insecurity.

Accordingly, 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.

Migration Normal

The rate of short-term labor migration for all the development regions are at expected levels. This cycle's data shows that migrants have followed the established pattern of leaving after the winter crop has been sown in November-December and so are expected to return for its harvest in March-April.

Gaps in Monitoring Coverage

During this reporting period, UN staff travel freezes prevented WFP/VAM Field Monitors from collecting data in the 5 districts of Parsa, Kavre, Bajhang, Kailali, and Surkhet. Also Rolpa data are missing because the monitor was temporarily redeployed for the internal migration survey. Today, however, only Kailali, Kavre and Surkhet among WFP's working districts remain under travel freeze and will not contribute to the analysis in the next Food Security Bulletin. The general conclusions of both bulletins should be viewed in the light of their gaps in monitoring coverage.

Internal Migration Survey Finished

WFP/VAM conducted an assessment of internal migration from October, 2004 through March, 2005. Findings of the Rapid Assessment of Internal Migration are available for public download in the Publications/Reports/Maps section of <http://www.wfp.org.np>.

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.

Development Regions, Administrative Zones and Districts



The boundaries and names shown on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations

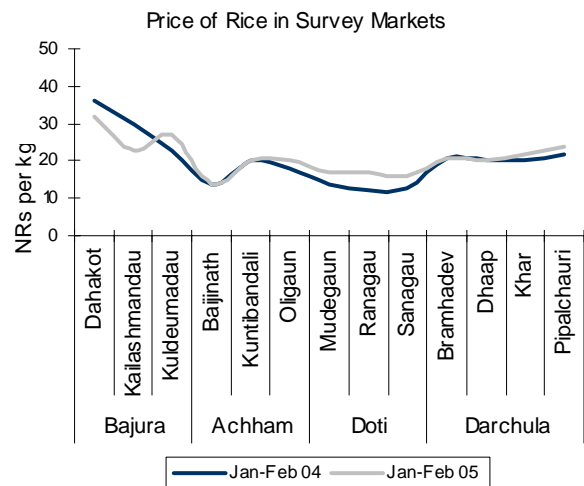
Far Western Region Food Security, January-February

Seven Monitors survey food security in the 7 Hill and Mountain districts of Achham, Baitadi, Bajhang, Bajura, Dadeldhura, Darchula and Doti. Though, during this reporting cycle, there was no monitoring in Bajhang because WFP suspended its support to activities in the district.

Production. January and February are the growing season of wheat and barley in the Far Western Development Region. With the exception of Baitadi where the crop is expected to produce a normal yield, all respondents provide upbeat projections for the February to May harvests of barley and wheat. The bulk is harvested between March and May (see also seasonal calendar on p. 7). They cite timely and sufficient rains as well as the snow cover that helped to keep crops moist at the early stages of planting in the hill areas as justification for expecting a strong yield this year. The slightly later rain- and snowfall in Baitadi accounts for respondents' relatively lower expectations there.

This is the traditional lean season and the major cereal harvests are a few months into the future. Yet, indications are that these will turn out well indeed.

Price. Staple food prices have risen by single-digit percentage points across the districts due to hikes in taxes and fuel and other transportation costs. The exception to the rule is Bajura where the resumption of adequate and timely supplies after last reporting cycle's blockade pushed down prices slightly in two out of three surveyed markets.



Movement. In Dadeldhura and Darchula, the CPN(M) restricts the movement of foodstuffs, such as goats and ghee, to district headquarters. In

Bajura, food can move freely provided an eight percent tax of its value is paid to the CPN(M). While the government requires permission for, the CPN(M) altogether prevents the movement of, food to headquarters in Achcham. In Doti, the CPN(M) limits the movement of people into headquarters. In Baitadi, they employ a pass system to restrict movement of people out of headquarters.

During bandhs and blockades, however, these varied, local regulations are superseded by rigorous limitations on the movement of commodities, including foodstuffs, and people in all districts.

Income. Short-term labor migration is a mainstay of livelihood strategies during the lean season and remittances contribute significantly to household economies during these couple of months.

Produce from small-scale cash crop farming, such as oranges (Bajura and Darchula), and vegetables (Dadeldhura) help to sustain several household economies. So do portering, construction work, and other types of wage labor. This is particularly true for Baitadi and Achcham districts.

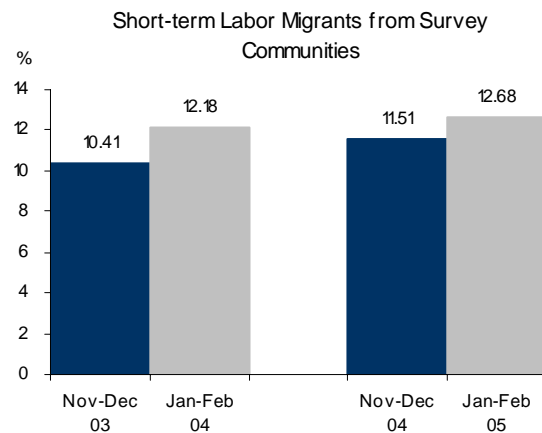
During this lean season, the Dalits in Dadeldhura take advantage of demand for the metal utensils that only their caste is permitted to produce and add Rs. 10-20,000 to their annual income from sales.

Firewood and wild herb collection are also prominent on the list of income-earning activities for the lean season in the far west. Though, neither are as profitable as hemp which people collect and sell at the rate of Rs. 130 per kg. in Bajura or *Amala-Emblic-myrobalan*, a fruit used for medicine, which people in Doti collect and sell for Rs. 20 per kg.

Respondents in Doti district expressed the hope that WFP's RCIW project would provide stable employment in lieu of less sustainable income-earning strategies soon.

Migration. Traditional migration patterns would have it that this reporting cycle sees little in- or outward-bound movement. And there is a very slight increase in the proportion of the WFP/VAM survey population that was away from their communities on short-term labor migration during January-

February over last reporting cycle. The migrants are expected to return for the harvest of the winter crop, sometime between March and April.



Mid Western and Western Region Food Security, January-February

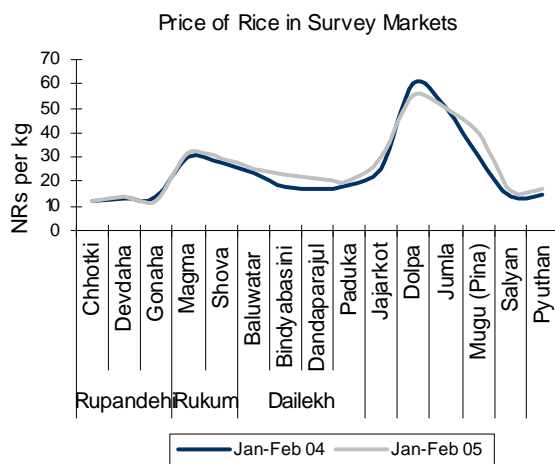
Fourteen Monitors survey food security in the 12 Mid Western Hill and Mountain districts of Dailekh, Dolpa, Humla, Jajarkot, Jumla, Kalikot, Mugu, Pyuthan, Rolpa, Rukum, Salyan, and Surkhet in addition to the Western Terai district of Rupandehi and migration patterns at 3 border points with India. Though, during this reporting cycle, there was no monitoring in Kailali, Surkhet and Rolpa where the monitors were redeployed due to UN staff travel freeze.

Production. January and February are the growing season of wheat and barley in the Mid Western and Western Development Regions. The expectation among all survey communities outside Dailekh is that the February-August harvest of wheat will provide a high yield. They have the same upbeat expectations for the February-November harvest of barley. It is worth noting that the bulk of both harvests is carried out between February and May (see also seasonal calendar on p. 7).

Respondents cite timely and adequate rains as the principal justification for their optimism. Higher altitude districts, including Kalikot, Pyuthan, Jumla and Dolpa, were also helped by the snowfall that kept crops moist at the early stages of planting. In Dailekh, many of the households that participate in the WFP survey migrated in November of last year to district headquarters as part of a local protest against the CPN(M). As a consequence, they missed the agricultural season for winter crops. This is the traditional lean season and major harvests are a few months into the future.

However, these are generally believed to turn out well, across crop types and districts.

Price. Increased taxes and fuel and other transportation costs have led to year-on-year price hikes for staple foods averaging fifteen percent. Two out of the fifteen markets surveyed show no change, though. Yet other two show a decrease. Furthermore, market prices are hard to monitor because they tend to fluctuate greatly day-by-day in smaller capacity markets such as the ones that WFP surveys. Still, in the case of Dailekh, where limited access by commercial transporters from Nepalgunj is a very real issue, the increase (28%) is worth taking note of.



Movement. In Pyuthan and Rukum, no restrictions on the movement of either people or food were reported. Mugu has no restrictions in place, either. Yet, reports indicate that fear of attracting unwanted attention by either party to the conflict keeps some people home anyway. In the southern and northern parts of Mugu, people tackle the issue of restrictions by sourcing food from Bajura district and China, respectively instead.

In Jumla, Dolpa and Humla, various degrees of restriction on food movement into district headquarters are in place – ranging from a formal permit system to near complete blockade. Consequently, Dolpa headquarters has its food supplies airlifted. In Jumla, the constant probing by both parties to the conflict arguably limits movement of both food and people as much as the local permit systems do. In Jajarkot, there are no restrictions on food movement but a pass system in place for people wishing to move within and outside the district. In Salyan, restrictions apply only to food go

ing into or out of district headquarters.

In Kalikot, food is not affected by restrictions but people are: with few exceptions, such as the headmaster going to collect the pay of his teaching staff, no one is allowed to move from the interior to headquarters.

Dailekh restrictions apply to a certain amount of foodstuffs only: people are allowed to move freely and may carry up to 50 kg per person out of headquarters – no traders or commercial transport is allowed.

In all districts, bandhs and blockades change the picture completely and imply rigorous movement restrictions on foodstuffs, non-food items, and people alike.

Income. Government-sponsored construction work in district headquarters and collection and sale of non-timber forest products (NTFP) sustain many households in Jajarkot, Salyan, Kalikot, Mugu, Jumla, and Dolpa throughout this lean season. In the absence of such gainful employment, respondents in Rukum and Dailekh districts have migrated for labor elsewhere or engage in basket weaving, firewood collection and other less sustainable and stable occupations.

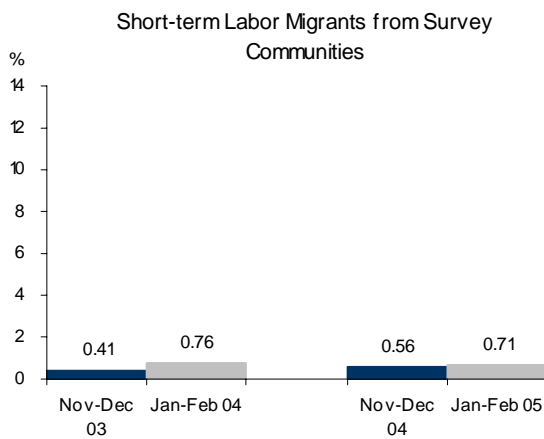
Also in Dailekh, about 200 women from the VDCs around headquarters are crushing stones at the rate of Rs. 60 a day. By comparison, firewood collectors make about Rs. 100 a day.

Migration. Traditional migration patterns would have it that this reporting cycle sees little in- or outward-bound movement. And there is a very slight decrease in the proportion of the WFP/VAM survey population that was away from their communities on short-term labor migration during January-February over last reporting cycle. The migrants are expected to return for the harvest of the winter crops, sometime between March and April.

In Mugu, the CPN(M) pass system is reportedly enforced through seizing the remittances from migrants who did not secure this permission before leaving. In Jajarkot, respondents claim they are afraid of migrating to India after the CPN(M) allegedly punished some who did.

Pagnath VDC in Dailekh district saw the early return of many migrants to participate in the start

up of WFP's RCIW project this year; they were not expected to return till April.



Central and Eastern Regions Food Security, January-February

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 Udayapur. Though, during this reporting cycle, there was no monitoring in Kavre, Parsa, and Sindhupalchok where the monitors were redeployed due to UN staff travel freeze.

Production. January and February are the growing season of wheat in the Central and Eastern Development Regions. The expectation among all survey communities outside Makwanpur is that the February-June harvest of wheat will provide a high yield. The bulk is harvested between April and May (see also seasonal calendar on p. 7).

Makwanpur did not see the snow cover that kept the crop moist at its early stages and increased respondents' yield estimations in the other districts.

The other food crop in focus during this cycle is potato. In southern parts of Rasuwa, the potato harvest began toward the end of January. In Nuwakot, potato farmers will continue to harvest until the beginning of April. In Dolakha and Makwanpur, potato is under cultivation and will not be harvested until June in Makwanpur and August in Dolakha.

Mustard seed is planted on ten percent greater land in Rasuwa this year after good rains encour-

aged farmers to increase their investment in a crop that contributes about 20% of oil requirements in the area. In Dhanusha, though, the commercial production of sugarcane was a disappointment this year because frequent bandhs and blockades prevented producers from taking their crop to the main markets.

In short, this is the traditional lean season and the next cereal harvest is a few months into the future but it is believed that this will turn out very well.

Movement. The CPN(M) restriction on the movement of food commodities in and out of district headquarters in Makwanpur has been lifted. None of the other districts have any restrictions on the movement of food in place. There are also no formal limitations on the movement of people. Though, in Nuwakot and Rasuwa, a system of verbal permission from the CPN(M) is implemented to some degree. Still, even in the absence of such systems, reports indicate that the constant surveillance by both parties to the conflict deter some people from moving, anyway.

Income. Short-term labor migration is a mainstay of livelihood strategies during the lean season. In one VDC (Lachyang) in Nuwakot district, as many as 80% of households have at least one member who is in Kathmandu working for a daily wage or engaged in portering work in the district.

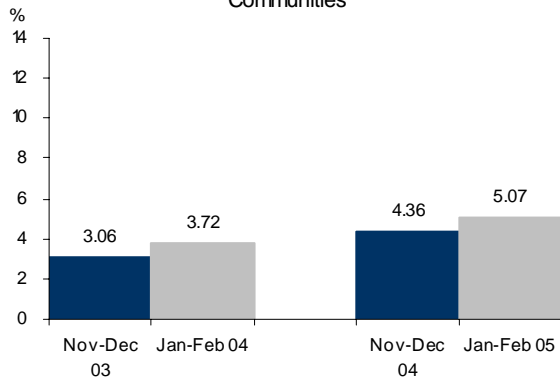
Produce from small-scale vegetable farming, such as yams (Makwanpur), and fruits, like oranges (Ramechhap), help to sustain several household economics. Whereas fruit sales is a profitable business, earning each household a minimum of Rs. 10,000 in one season, less gainful pursuits, such as firewood and wild herb collection, complement or substitute it in other households as they deal with the lean season.

In Aaptar VDC, in Udayapur district, WFP's RCIW project provides stable employment in lieu of portering and other less sustainable income-earning strategies.

Respondents residing near the Siwalik foothill in Saptari district have developed a new lean-season livelihood strategy altogether: pilfering and smuggling of timber. Quite a profitable, if not legal, means of making a living, it tops the list of financial desir-

ability along with working in the brick factories or construction industry.

Short-term Labor Migrants from Survey Communities



Migration. Traditional migration patterns would have it that this reporting cycle sees little in- or outward-bound movement. And there is a very slight increase in the proportion of the WFP/VAM survey population that was away from their communities on short-term labor migration during January-February over last reporting cycle. The migrants are expected to return for the harvest of the winter crops, sometime between March and April, or by June in time for rice planting.

The slight increase in the migration rate for the region is due to increases in Udayapur where both

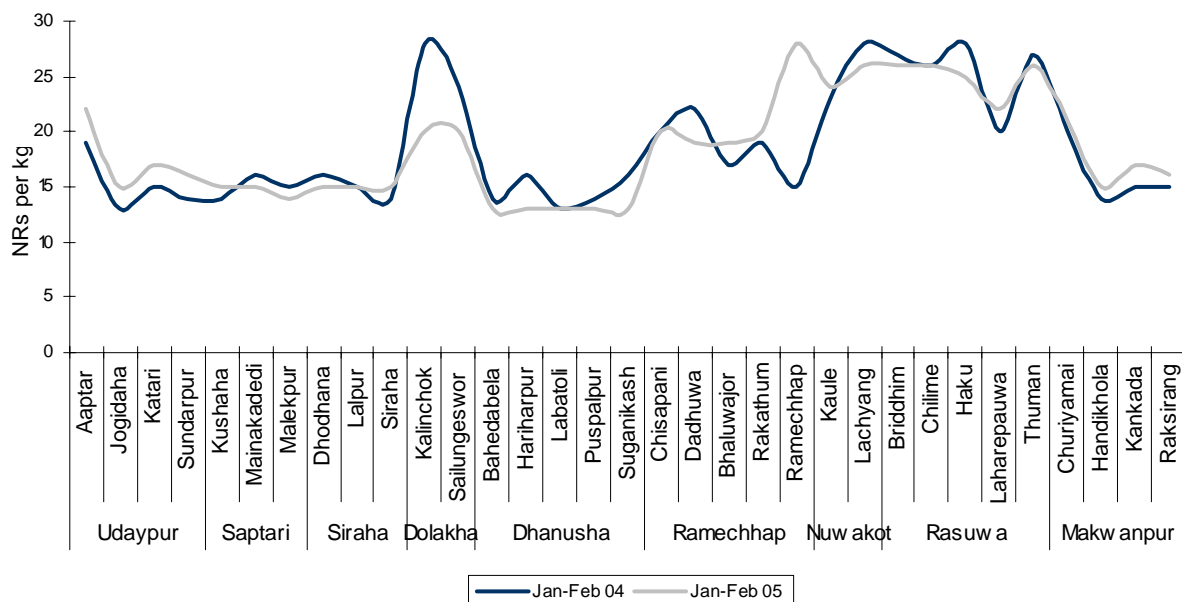
third-country and India-bound labor migration are driven by the lack of local employment opportunities. Also Rasuwa and Nuwakot contribute.

In Makwanpur, slightly less than half of the migrants who had left the survey communities for short-term labor in Chitwan and Kathmandu temporarily returned home for the Maghe Sankranti Festival on January 14. Their free back-and-forth movement sustains the impression this is voluntary migration for labour and not directly related to the conflict.

In Udayapur, out of the ten who migrated for labor from Jogidaha VDC to Kathmandu, five returned empty-handed but joined WFP's RCiW project.

Price. Increased taxes and fuel and other transportation costs have led to year-on-year price hikes for staple foods averaging ten percent. Four out of the thirty-three markets surveyed show no change, though. Yet other fourteen show a decrease. Furthermore, market prices are hard to monitor because they tend to fluctuate greatly day-by-day in smaller capacity markets such as the ones that WFP surveys. The impressive range of fluctuations picked up by the monitors in the Central and Eastern Region during this cycle testify to that.

Price of Rice in Survey Markets



Seasonal Calendar

Region	Rice		Wheat		Maize		Millet		Barley		Potato		
	Planting	Harvesting	Sowing/ Cultivation	Harvesting	Sowing/ Cultivation	Harvesting	Planting	Harvesting	Sowing/ Cultivation	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					Sep - Nov	Dec - Mar
Western	Mountain			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			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			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 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