



Editorial

This monitoring cycle is the traditional lean season in agricultural Nepal, with participants to the WFP/VAM survey reporting limited food stocks (ranging from 2 weeks to 2 months) and an increase in their engagement in alternative livelihood sources. As before, a range of livelihood strategies have been reported, including wage labour, the sale of fuel wood, bamboo crafts and milk, the collection of forest products, and road construction.

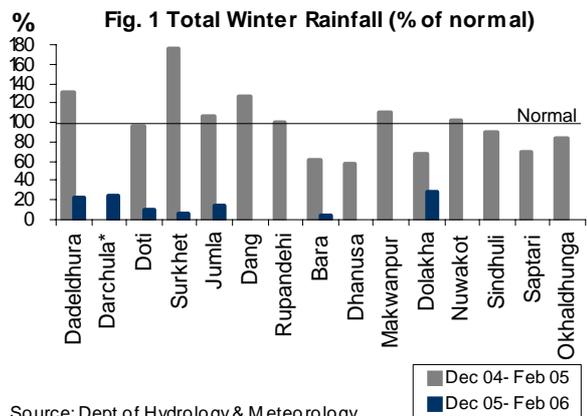
Local yield predictions for the winter harvest of wheat and barley are not promising, particularly in areas lacking irrigation facilities. In these areas, inadequate rain and snowfall during the planting and growth stages have resulted in the poor performance of the crop thus far. Based on this cycle's plant conditions, survey participants reported an anticipated decrease in production as large as 50%. Rains received after the end of this monitoring cycle, in early to mid-March, may have a positive effect on wheat and barley production, but the actual effect of these late rains cannot yet be determined.

The data indicate a slight, but not yet significant, increase in the price of basic food items. Many districts report no change in prices due to regular food movement, while others show small increases due to rising prices in the *Terai* source markets and transport costs, *Bandhs*, and low production/stocks.

This cycle's data shows no current indication of extraordinary stress or coping mechanisms, however, this situation may change. Reports indicate that households in Kalikot, eastern Bajura, Dailekh, Jajarkot, Mugu, Dolpa, Humla, and Jumla districts have low food stocks, given their poor summer harvest of rice, millet and/or maize. Low yields of the winter harvests of wheat and barley may compound this problem, with the combination of two successive weak harvests resulting in increased vulnerability to food insecurity in the districts and Village Development Committees (VDCs) covered by WFP/VAM Food Security Monitoring.

Driest Winter in Recorded History of Nepal

The Department of Hydrology and Meteorology has identified this winter as the driest since the 1960s. Winter rainfall usually varies between approximately 40mm in the Eastern *Terai* to more than 130 mm in the Northwestern Mountains. This year, winter rainfall was less than 30% of normal, with some areas receiving no precipitation from November 2005 to February 2006. This is likely to have an adverse impact on the production of the winter crops, particularly wheat, barley, and potato, however the extent of this is yet to be determined. Last year's harvest of wheat and barley was quite good, especially in the Far Western and Mid Western regions where rainfall was normal and even above normal (see Figure 1).

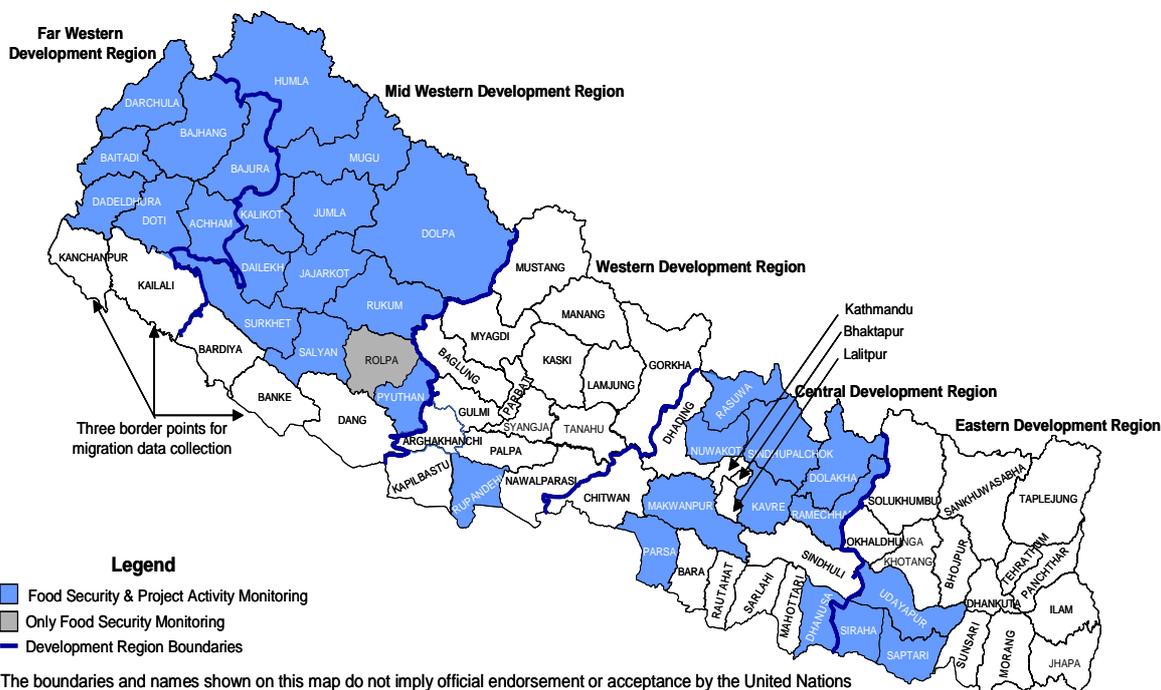


Source: Dept of Hydrology & Meteorology

Food Security Monitoring (FSM) in Nepal

World Food Programme monitors food security in the 32 Districts where it implements development activities in Nepal. The Department for International Development (DFID) of the UK Government has funded, and the Vulnerability Analysis and Mapping (VAM) Unit of WFP Nepal has managed the project since its inception in October 2002.

Thirty field monitors monitor 32 Districts and 3 border points with India. 29 of them collect household and community data on food security in these 32 Districts. They aim to conduct about 1,500 repeat household interviews, in 150 VDCs, during every two-month monitoring cycle. One field 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.



Far-western Region

Seven Monitors survey food security in the 7 Hill and Mountain district of Achham, Baitadi, Bajhang, Bajura, Dadeldhura, Darchula and Doti.

Production. January and February represent the growing season of wheat and barley in the Far Western Development region.

The area of wheat cultivated remained the same as last year in Achham, Baitadi, Dadeldhura and Doti districts, while timely rainfall during wheat and barley planting enabled an increase in the area sown in both Bajura and Darchula.

Wheat crop conditions are generally not good in the region, due to the lack of rainfall since December. In Achham, Doti, Bajhang and the non-irrigated areas of Dadeldhura, the condition of standing crops is poor, with the plants turning pale due to an absence of moisture in the soil. Farmers in these districts say that rain will be needed by the end of February or early March in order to prevent a decrease in this year's production. Based on the current conditions, farmers expect a decrease in production around 40-50% in Dadeldhura and 50% in Baitadi. In addition, crops in Bajura have been affected by disease and insects. Darchula and Bajhang both report favorable

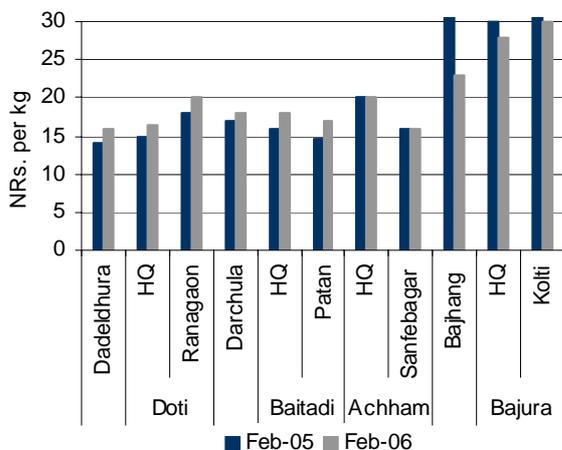
plant conditions, which are attributed to a January rain in Darchula and irrigation facilities in Bajhang.

Mustard has also been cultivated in Achham and lentils and peas in 3 lowland VDCs of Dadeldhura. The condition of these crops, normally used only in household consumption, is also not good due to insufficient rainfall.

Price. Retail prices have been relatively stable in this monitoring cycle. Compared to the same period last year, Achham reports no change in prices, while Darchula and survey communities in Bajhang cite an increase of NRs. 1-2/kg of rice. Doti, Dadeldhura and Baitadi also report a rise in market price, from NRs. 1.5-2.5/kg of rice, which is attributed to an increase of prices at the source markets.

Both the headquarter markets of Bajura and Bajhang report decreases in market prices. In Bajura, a decrease of NRs. 2/kg of rice was noted and is attributed to the frequent delivery of rice, the establishment of a new market closer than the previous source, and the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) (CPN(M)) allowance for mules to help transport goods from Sanfe. In the Bajhang headquarters, the price of rice has decreased from

Fig. 2 Price of Rice in Important Markets



NRs. 32/kg last year to NRs. 23/kg this year, a 28% reduction. This is due to a lifting of previous CPN(M) restrictions prohibiting the delivery of food to the district headquarters and to the new delivery of 100 MT of good quality rice by the Nepal Food Corporation.

The recent hike in fuel and transportation costs may affect prices in the next monitoring cycle.

Income. RCIW works are operational in all districts of the region and continue to be an important source of food and income for its participants. The program engages 9200 persons in Achham and 2500 persons in Doti, providing each person 2 kg. of rice and NRs. 60/day. Some 200 persons in Baitadi, 500 persons in Bajhang, 5900 people in Dadeldhura also participated in RCIW works to receive 4 kg. of rice/day.

A combination of various other livelihood strategies was used in all districts. Construction work was a significant income opportunity for people in Bajura, Baitadi and Bajhang. In Bajura and Baitadi, this was largely road construction works, from which people earned NRs. 80-100/day and NRs. 100-120/day, respectively. Construction work in Bajhang was implemented by NGOs/INGOs throughout the district.

Supplementing construction employment, 200 households in Bajura also collected *Lokta* for the local Handmade Paper Cottage Industry, earning NRs. 2400/month. Also in addition to road works, people from Dehimandu VDC of Baitadi relied on the sale of handmade bamboo crafts for income

and 100 people from Bajhang found employment as shepherds on the mule track from Jhota to Chainpur, earning NRs. 2500-3000/month during this period.

People from Achham, Darchula and Bajhang were also able to earn money portering, while the sale of milk was used by others in Darchula (40-50 households), Dadeldhura (400 households), and Bajhang (30 households). About 150 households in Dadeldhura engaged in vegetable sales.

Movement. The *Bandh* called by CPN(M) affected the movement throughout the region for 4-7 days in February. Otherwise, movement of food and people has been generally free. Survey participants in Achham and Bajura particularly contrast the current situation to that of last year at this time, when there was complete restriction of movement.

The use of a permit system by CPN(M) for movement in the southern part of Doti should be noted, as well as the protracted restriction of food movement from Dehimandu market to the Tallo Sorad area (11 VDCs) in Baitadi.

Migration. This monitoring cycle is traditionally a low period of in- and out-migration.

Districts from this region did not report significant out-migration this cycle. Achham, Darchula, and Dadeldhura report a few people leaving, but in all cases, it was less than the number of people who left at this time last year. Doti reports migration to be similar to last year at this time.

Most districts expect to see migrants returning home in March or April, although Bajhang and Baitadi reported more people returning during this cycle than at this time last year. In Baitadi, this is attributed to the RCIW works started in January in the Purchudi area.

Mid Western and Western Regions

Fourteen Monitors survey food security in the 12 Mid Western Mountain and Hill districts of Dailekh, Dolpa, Humla, Jajarkot, Jumla, Kalikot, Mugu, Pyuthan, Rolpa, Rukum, Salyan, and Surkhet, in addition to the Western Terai district of Rupandehi. Migrations patterns are also monitored at 3 border points with India.

Production. This monitoring cycle is the growing season of wheat, barley, and potato in the Mid Western and Western Development regions. This is the traditional lean season in these regions, with the next major harvest expected to begin only from March to June, depending on elevation.

In all 13 districts, outlook for the upcoming wheat harvest is poor. Despite the good growth reported during the last monitoring cycle, untimely and inadequate rainfall has lowered expectations for this harvest. Rain or snowfall is generally needed in December and January to ensure good growth of the wheat crop, but this year has seen little precipitation since October 2005. At the time of data collection, farmers report that they expect plants in non-irrigated areas to dry out if rains are not received by the end of February. Farmers from survey communities in Dailekh, Rolpa, Salyan, and Jumla anticipate a 50% reduction in the wheat crop production if there is still no rain by the end of February.

In Salyan, Rukum, Surkhet, Mugu, Humla, and Jumla, barley has also been cultivated, though reports indicate that the crop condition is not good. According to survey participants, without rainfall, farmers in these districts expect a reduction in the barley harvest similar to that being seen in wheat.

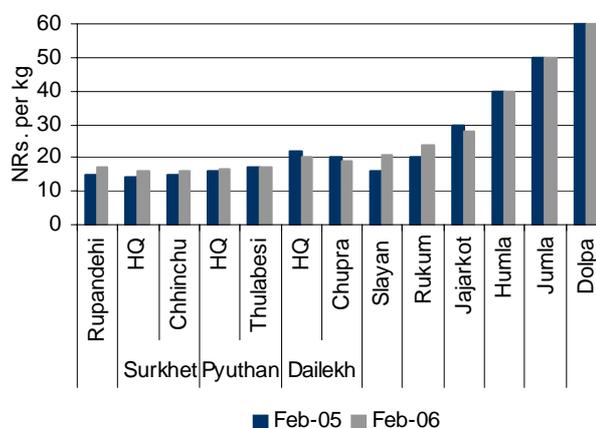
Mustard has been harvested in four VDCs of Jajarkot and potato in thirteen eastern and central VDCs of Pyuthan, but these harvests were less this year due to the lack of rain. Pyuthan's potato production decreased as much as 50% compared to last year.

Potato and vegetables have been cultivated in Rupandehi through the support of a national NGO. The northern and middle parts of Humla saw snowfall in mid-January, which may help production in those areas. Plant growth is also good in five VDCs of Kalikot where irrigation facilities are used (Sipkhana, Mumra, Syuna, Mehelmundi, and Phukot) but is poor in VDCs lacking irrigation

facilities (Nanikot, Dhaulagoha, Ramnakot, Thirpu, Khina, Dahan, Bharta, and Manma).

Price. Retail prices of basic food items have been relatively stable throughout the region in this monitoring cycle. Five of thirteen districts surveyed, including Rolpa, Rukum, Humla, Jumla, and Dolpa, report no significant changes in prices, generally attributed to regular movement of food. Retail prices in the villages of Kalikot also remained the same, as they are fixed by CPN (M), though prices in the district headquarters increased slightly this cycle. Other districts report increases of NRs. 1-5/kg of rice, which are attributed to decreases in production, *Bandhs*, and increases in demand, source prices and transportation costs. For example, the price of rice has increased by NRs.1 in Dailekh due to an increase in source prices. Cereals and pulses have gone up by NRs. 2-5/kg in Jajarkot because of lower production and frequent *Bandhs*. Salyan, Pyuthan and Surkhet have also seen a slight increase in cereal prices by NRs. 1-3/kg.

Fig. 3 Price of Rice in Important Markets



In Mugu district, low production and high demand have contributed to increase in the price of beans, potato and local *Ghee*. The price of meat in Mugu has similarly risen due to CPN (M) restrictions on the transporting of goats and sheep from villages.

Income. Livelihood strategies in the Mid Western and Western Development regions continue to be multifaceted, and vary both among and within the districts.

In Dailekh, portering, fishing and selling firewood were important means of income. In the Bandev community of Paduka VDC, the *Dalit* households

continue to practice their traditional occupations, such as sewing, blacksmithing or making utensils for income, though migration to India remains the most reliable source of income for this community.

In Jajarkot, 130 households of the Dhime and Paink VDCs engaged in the sale of bananas and herbal products, while others found employment working in the Chhinchu-Jajarkot road construction project.

Survey households in Rupandehi largely found employment as wage labour, though those from the Kewtalia community in Ramnagar VDC earned income through the production and sale of natural fibre baskets.

In Rolpa, some 800 people found employment in a FSRP/GTZ project, earning 3.5 kg of rice/day and NRs. 70/day for, on average, 25 days. Others in this district relied on wage labour and out-migration. Survey households of Shreenagar and Karkibada VDCs of Mugu earned, on average, NRs. 1900 this cycle by selling fuel wood and bamboo crafts, portering and engaging in wage labour.

In Salyan, the sale of dry ginger, pepper and soap nut was common for households in the middle to upper Hill belt of the district, earning at least NRs. 5000 and up to NRs. 30,000 this cycle. A Food for Work programme also provided 1.5 quintals of rice to 1800 households, while 500 additional people participated in the Salli Bazar-Chaurjahari-Dolpa road project earning an average of NRs. 12,000 this cycle. The sale of fuel wood was seen in several VDCs, earning an average of NRs. 300/week.

In Humla, 35 households from Shree Masta VDC engaged in the collection and portering of Non-Timber Forest Products (NTFP), earning on average NRs. 3,200 per household, while those from the district headquarter and neighbouring VDCs were able to earn around NRs. 4,500 each transporting stone and timber into the headquarters area. Survey respondents in Jumla similarly report engaging in the collection of NTFP, portering, and construction activities.

In Kalikot, over 1500 people from 20 VDCs have been engaged in construction work for the Karnali Highway, earning NRs. 120/day. The road project has become a more significant employment source this year compared to last, as last year the CPN(M)

limited the employment opportunity to one VDC in the district. People also commonly engaged in selling of fuel wood, NTFP and vegetables, local wage labour, and out-migration particularly to India.

Movement. This monitoring cycle saw *Bandhs* called in February by the CPN (M) in response to the municipal elections. In all districts, the *Bandhs* introduced rigorous movement restrictions on food items, non-food items, and people.

In addition, restrictions on personal movement are enforced by CPN(M) in Humla and in some parts of Rolpa, while a permit system is in place for personal and food movement in Mugu. Respondents report that Security Force checks in Surkhet are becoming tighter throughout the district. In addition, Rolpa and Jumla report a 10 kg/person limit on the quantity of food items that can be brought into villages from the district headquarters.

Migration. This reporting cycle traditionally sees little in- or out-ward migration. In the VAM survey population, there are mixed reports on the extent of migration this year, as compared to last year. In Dailekh and Pyuthan, respondents report a decrease in migration compared to this time last year, which is attributed to the improved security situation this year. An increase in migration was reported in Jajarkot, Salyan, Jumla and Surkhet; respondents indicate that household members have left in search of wage labour due to low summer crop production.

This cycle has seen few reports of in-migration, though this is expected. Those who migrated out in previous cycles generally will return only in March and April for the next harvest.

Central and Eastern Regions

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

Production. This monitoring cycle is traditionally the growing season of wheat in the Central and Eastern Development regions.

The area of wheat planted has remained the same as last year in Udayapur, Rasuwa, and Ramechhap but has decreased in the upland areas Dolakha, Makwanpur, Parsa, Saptari and Sindhupalchok. In Makwanpur, this decrease is due to a slight shift away from wheat to cash crops, such as ginger, turmeric, and seasonal vegetables while the decreases in Parsa and Saptari, 20% and 25% less cultivation area respectively, are attributed to the lack of rainfall at the time of planting.

Dhanusha and Siraha report increases in the area of wheat planted. In Dhanusha, the area of wheat planted increased from 25,000 ha to almost 28,000 ha due to the rehabilitation of irrigation canals damaged in 2004. In Siraha, the area increased by about 800 ha due to timely water supply provided by the Kamala River irrigation canal.

The condition of the wheat crop appears to vary with access to irrigation. In the lowland areas of Rasuwa, Makwanpur, Ramechhap, Dhanusha and Siraha, the condition of the standing wheat crop is relatively good due to improved and timely irrigation. In contrast, lack of rainfall has negatively impacted the crop condition in the upland or non-irrigated areas of Rasuwa, Makwanpur, Parsa, Saptari, Kavre, and Sindhupalchok. In these non-irrigated areas, farmers report that the soil lacks adequate moisture, and plants are drying out. Farmers in all areas across the region note that rain is needed in the coming months to ensure a good yield. Farmers in Parsa and Kavre currently anticipate a 25% and 30-35% decrease in production, respectively.

Reports from Dolakha also note the effects of a disease, *Dadhuwa* or stripe rust, on wheat crops in non-irrigated areas.

This cycle's other major crop is potato. Farmers from particular areas of Dolakha, Rasuwa,

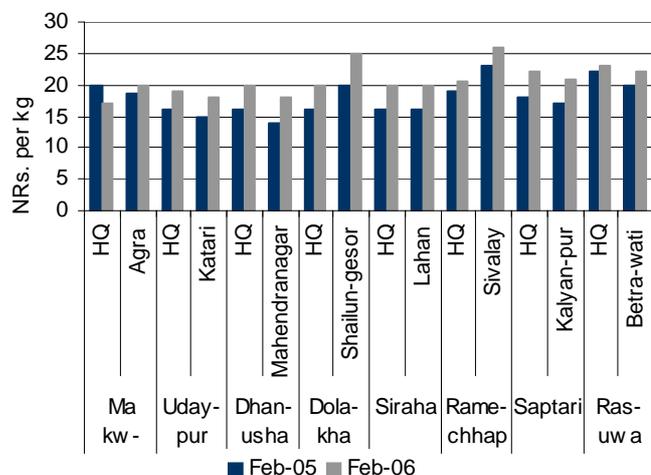
Makwanpur, Dhanusha, Parsa, Saptari, Siraha and Kavre districts harvested potato in January and February. Among these districts, only Dolakha and Kavre reported a decrease in production, due to a *Dadhuwa* infestation. Rasuwa, Makwanpur, Dhanusha, Parsa, Saptari, and Siraha all report higher production this year than last year, attributed to this winter's absence of cold spells.

This is also the season for the collection of wild foods. Households from Makwanpur note the importance of wild roots and tubers for this cycle and report stocks of wild foods to be sufficient for 3-4 weeks.

In northern and western Dolakha and Ramechhap, where potato is largely considered a staple food, planting was completed this cycle and the harvest is expected in August. Fields were also prepared for the upcoming maize cultivation in Dolakha.

Price. The price of basic foodstuffs has slightly increased across the Central and Eastern Regions. In Rasuwa, the price of rice and maize increased by NRs. 1-2/kg and that in Makwanpur by NRs. 2-3/kg. The districts of Ramechhap, Udayapur, Dhanusha, Parsa, Siraha and Saptari also report increases in the price of rice from NRs. 1.5-3/kg, with Dolakha reporting the largest increase in the region at NRs. 4/kg of rice. These increases are attributed to the inter-related factors of low summer production, low stocks in the lean season and higher prices in the source markets. The recent increase in fuel and transportation costs may contribute to further increases in the prices of basic commodities in the months to come.

Fig. 4 Price of Rice in Important Markets



The decrease of prices in the Aptar, Rauta, Khabu and Pokhari VDCs of Udayapur should also be noted. The extension of the RCIW road, on which tractors are plying this year, helped decrease the cost of rice by NRs. 3/kg. Last year, the delivery of food and other goods was made by porter and was more costly.

Movement. Overall, there were few restrictions on the movement of food and people during this monitoring cycle, except during the *Bandhs* called by either the Seven Party Alliance or CPN(M). The *Bandhs* lasted for 5-7 days in Dolakha, Rasuwa, Makawanpur, Ramechhap, Udayapur, and Dhanusha and for 10 days in Saptari. Makawanpur also reported the restriction of traffic to the eastern VDCs for 10 days in January.

Parsa notes that intense checking from the Security Forces continued on all roads and at designated checkpoints. The high presence of security personnel caused concern among some survey participants but did not interfere with the movement of food.

Income. As expected, survey respondents report engaging in a number of different livelihood strategies during this monitoring cycle.

RCIW provided working opportunities for about 700 households from both Dolakha and Saptari during this cycle, providing each household with 50 kg of rice. Mid-February also saw the beginning of a new RCIW project in the Agra and Gogane VDCs of Makwanpur.

Wage labour, portering, and the sale of fuel wood continue to be important sources of income in most surveyed districts in the region. In addition to these more common income sources, survey respondents in Rasuwa also report working for the nearby Chilime Hydropower Project and in the sale/ collection of NTFPs. Some people from Ramechhap have also been involved with a road construction project funded by DRSP/SDC and a UMN/local NGO- implemented goat-raising project. Survey households from Sundarpur VDC in Udayapur were additionally engaged in fishing to earn NRs. 50-60/day, with other reports from this district noting the sale of livestock for cash.

Seasonal vegetable farming is considered as a

significant source of income in Dhanusha and Parsa. Farmers from Kanakpatti VDC, Dhanusha report earning NRs. 15,000/season from vegetables grown on less than one hectare of land. Half of all households in 3 of the 5 survey communities in Dhanusha reported to be engaged in seasonal vegetables farming.

Migration. In four of the seven surveyed districts, migration has increased compared to last year at this time. Though this is not the traditional time for migration, communities in Dolakha, Udayapur, Dhanusha and Saptari all report increases in the number of out-migrants. In Dolakha, this is attributed to lower productivity of land and greater ease of travel due to the improved security situation. In Shailungeshwor VDC of Dolakha, the number of people leaving increased from 15 to 26 between last and this year. In Sundarpur VDC of Udayapur, the increase is even more dramatic, rising from 12 people last year to 62 people this year. The latter can be attributed to the VDC's depleted food stocks and limited livelihood opportunities.

In contrast, Rasuwa, Makwanpur and Ramechhap report a minimal number of out-migrants during this monitoring cycle.

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 - 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