

## Mitigating fodder deficits in the Mid hills

Livestock raising is an integrated part of subsistence farming of the poor families in Nepal. Milk is by far the most important livestock commodity, with meat next. The importance of livestock sector to development has already been well established. And there is no need to mention that the development of the latter depends solely on the production of quality tree fodder and forage, especially in Nepal's Midhills.

With the present scenario where crop residue contributes only about 47% of animal feed, and forests contributing 30%, the importance of noncultivated inclusions that supplies rest of the 23%, can not be ignored. However, despite such sources, the livestock are generally underfed as are evident with their low level of milk and meat production, which is directly associated with the low supply of forage from rangelands. Given such circumstances finding ways and means to address the fodder deficits is a welcoming, nonetheless belated job.

A gathering of about 100 participants representing researchers, extension workers, farmers, policy makers and donors from a wide range of institutions such as GO, NGO and University expressed informed views and opinion on this matter during a two-day **National Workshop on Improving Strategies for Identifying and Addressing Fodder Deficits in the Midhills**. The Workshop, held on 5-6 September 2000, was organised

jointly by the Department of Forest Research and Survey and the Natural Resources Institute of the United Kingdom. Fourteen technical papers were presented from 11 different national and international organisations working on this topic in Nepal. Most of the papers, that addressed aspects of research methodology, fodder management, improved extension system, etc. were focussed towards highlighting issues related to improved fodder production in the Midhills especially during the fodder deficit period.

During the group discussions the participants expressed of the opinion that one way of achieving the improved production of livestock feeds is through the increasing linkages between the organisations involved. This would not only help undertake strategic research and implement the result, but also help monitor the overall programme. A National-level Coordination Committee was suggested to be formed that will be responsible to bring out guidelines on policy, action research, and extension works related to improved fodder production in the Midhills of Nepal. Also, the Committee's other major responsibility would be to build and strengthen research-extension-farmer linkage. With the growing trend of community forests, it was stressed that the main priority should be given to involve forest user groups in action research



*Grewia optiva*,  
a highly preferred fodder species

related to agroforestry and fodder production, and those which have been successfully implemented should be replicated elsewhere.

The Workshop was a part of the activity of a collaborative research project entitled **Improved Strategies for Identifying and Addressing Fodder Deficits, using Participatory Research Techniques** that was funded by the Department for International Development and managed by the Natural Resources Institute in collaboration with the Nepal Agroforestry Foundation and the Department of Forest Research and Survey. The suggestions of the Workshop if implemented thoroughly are expected to enrich our knowledge on improved fodder production.

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