



Role of the Agriculture on Economic Growth in Nepal: An Explanatory Research

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Abstract

Background: Still, the agricultural sector remains central as the driving force for enhancing GDP and job creation. The research investigates how agriculture functions as an economic driver, creating direct connections to productivity, rural development, and structural economic changes. **Objective:** The study aims at assessing the contribution of the agriculture sector to



the country's economic growth. Recently, the Nepalese agricultural sector has faced several challenges, including low investment, limited adoption of technology, infrastructural problems, and marketing challenges. **Research design:** The study employs descriptive and analytical methods that are convenient to illustrate through tables, figures, and charts while presenting the data. On this basis, the secondary data from the Nepal Rastra Bank and the World Bank Development Indicators have been collected. **Findings:** The research manifested that the agricultural sector plays a vital role in Nepal's GDP and job creation, thus the agricultural sector is a crucial element for the national economy. Therefore, agriculture not only sustains a large segment of the population by providing employment and food security but also supports the livelihoods of rural smallholders. **Conclusion:** The study's central finding is that investments in modern agricultural tools further help to improve irrigation systems and value chain mechanisms of agro-processing industries established in different places within the country. The systems and mechanisms mentioned in the research results demonstrate that the agricultural sector significantly enhances the national GDP. **Novelty:** The study is useful in the field of agricultural sectors, outlining some dimensions of economic growth through employment that alleviates poverty and fosters GDP. **Implication:** The findings of this study can be a benchmark for GDP growth. It will be useful for policymakers, regulators, economists, scholars, academicians, development leaders, private sector, and other stakeholders who are striving for economic growth and policy formations in their respective fields or industries.

Keywords: Access to finance, agriculture, economic growth, government policy, poverty alleviation

JEL CLASSIFICATION: *E01, E12, E40*

1. Introduction

A landlocked country located in South Asia, Nepal has always had problems associated with underdevelopment, poverty, and economic disparity. For the majority (53 percent) of the Nepalese population, agricultural work serves as their primary source of employment, contributing to only 27 percent of the total GDP (World Bank, 2019).

In such a scenario, according to Lamichhane (2021), agriculture is known to serve as the backbone of the Nepalese economy. Various activities carried out in agriculture include cultivation of cereals and other vegetables, cash crops (Tea, Coffee, Jute, and Sugarcane), dairy and meat products from livestock, fish, and fruit.

Agriculture is an important part of Nepal, and the majority of the workforce is involved in this occupation. Agriculture is a major contributor to Nepal's economic development (Lamichhane, 2022). Most crops are grown by farmers for their own sustenance needs; however, there has been a trend towards growing cash crops and market-oriented agriculture. The diverse topography of the country ranging from the flat and fertile plains of Terai to hills and mountains creates diversity in agricultural systems. Terai is the main agricultural region in Nepal that enjoys irrigation facilities and good weather conditions for agriculture. On the other hand, hilly and mountain regions suffer from soil erosion and lack of arable lands. Agriculturalists in Terai



region grow rice and wheat as staple foods; in addition, they grow sugarcanes, pulses, vegetables, and cash crops. Irrigation along with the use of advanced farming methods increases productivity in the Terai region. The main crops grown in the hilly regions include maize, millets, and barley.

Furthermore, Nepal is famous for its cultivation of value-added crops such as tea, coffee, and cardamom, mostly grown in the hill and mountain areas of Nepal. This kind of agriculture is increasingly gaining prominence in Nepal since they help in generating additional sources of income in rural areas, which can supplement the income from subsistence agriculture.

Finally, the agricultural sector in Nepal has a rich history that spans over many centuries and is characterized by its unique agricultural practices, depending on the geography and culture of the nation. For instance, some of the oldest examples of agriculture in Nepal were discovered in the Kathmandu Valley and the Terai region of Nepal. The growth of staple crops such as barley, millet, and rice in these regions has been made possible through innovations like irrigation and terracing of the land due to the mountainous nature of Nepal's geography. Agriculture during the medieval period was heavily dominated by the feudal lords and landlords who held land under the feudal system in Nepal. Innovations in agriculture in this era were largely influenced by the kings of the Kathmandu Valley and the Gorkha kingdom in Nepal.

In modern times, Nepalese agriculture encounters difficulties like climate change, land degradation, and rural-to-urban migration (Lamichhane, 2021). Nevertheless, today there is an increasing tendency towards sustainability, implementation of technology, and state support aimed at overcoming these problems and improving the condition of the sector.

Nepalese agriculture is one of the sectors that are vital for Nepal as a country because it contributes significantly to its economic development, employment, and revenue generation. Studying its contribution to the economic processes taking place within the country can be interesting from various perspectives as it will make it possible to gain knowledge about the role of agriculture in the economy of the country and understand the interconnection between their dynamics better (Lamichhane, 2022). Such an understanding is useful for finding out how some changes in the productivity of the sector can influence economic processes within the country and how the state can manage to increase GDP through promoting this sector.

This study evaluates the role of agriculture especially in generating income, providing employment, and finally in the economic growth of Nepal measured by the GDP of the country. In this way, the agricultural sector will have broader social and economic implications apart from its contribution towards GDP. The sector contributes towards employment generation, rural development, and food security issues of the country. Focusing on the contribution of the agricultural sector to the GDP, the study will also be able to explore the various social and economic implications linked to the same. The purpose of this study is to evaluate the trends and status of agriculture in the economic growth of Nepal. To accomplish the purpose, this study adopts a qualitative approach for research.



2. Materials and Methods

Economic growth (GDP) in Agriculture indicates the extent of contribution of agriculture to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of a country. Economic growth is represented by the total worth of goods and services generated by agriculture which consists of farming, animal rearing, forests, fisheries, etc. Agriculture constitutes a major chunk of GDP, particularly in developing nations, but it tends to reduce in proportion as countries industrialize their economies and diversify sectors. This study has been conducted following the sequential explanatory and descriptive research methodology. Descriptive research studies attempt to examine the ideas, behaviors, and characteristics of some particular society and trend (Wolff and Pant, 2005). The data collected for this research is based on secondary sources. The findings in this study have been derived from secondary data obtained from Nepal Rastra Bank and World Bank Development Indicators. Hence, the data was analyzed using basic statistical methods such as percentages, tables, diagrams, and charts.

3. Review of Literature

3.1 Theoretical Foundations

This study reviewed three main theories of economic growth: Keynesian Theory of Income/Output Determination (KTID), Hicksian Theory of Income Determination (HTID) and Agricultural-Led Growth Theory (ALGT) that describe fostering GDP through agricultural development.

3.1.1 Keynesian Theory of Income/Output Determination (KTID)

This theory was propounded by J.M. Keynesians (1936 AD). According to this theory, the economy is always under full employment. Unemployment arises in the economy due to a deficiency of actual demand (Effective demand). The economy is in equilibrium under the full employment situation. The economy is in equilibrium at the point. Based on this theory, when effective demand is increased, it leads to a rise in aggregate demand, investment, production, employment, income, and again effective demand. Thus, the economy reached near full employment and increased output and income (Lamichhane, 2026). It helps to raise the economic growth of the nation.

3.1.2 Hicksian Theory of Income Determination (HTID)

This theory was developed by J.R.Hicks (1939). This theory shows the general equilibrium situation of two economies where money market equilibrium equals real sector equilibrium. In a money market equilibrium, it shows that the money demand equals the money supply. Similarly, the real sector equilibrium shows that the savings equal the investment and aggregate demand equals aggregate supply. The general equilibrium of the economy is determined at the point where the goods market (real sectors) equals the money market. At this equilibrium point, the economy is determined by the equilibrium rate of interest and national income.

3.1.3 Agricultural-Led Growth Theory (ALGT)

This theory was developed by John Mellor (1995). If the economy invests in rural agriculture, it leads rise production of goods and helps the economy's industrialization. Thus, investment in agriculture helps to reduce poverty and increase human capital. The increase in production



of the agriculture and industrial sectors, with the increase in productivity of human capital, raises the economic growth (GDP) of the country.

3.2 Empirical Review

There are many empirical papers which examined the contribution of agriculture on GDP growth of Nepal. However, some authors and scholars emphasized the positive and tangible contribution of agriculture to economic growth. Agricultural systems, which are directly linked with the issues of land, labor, changing social, cultural, geographic, and environmental specificities, migration, urbanization, food impact, land distribution, etc., need to be improved (Poudel, 2020).

Gauchan (2008) researched the topic “Agricultural Development in Nepal: Contribution to Economic Growth, Food Security and Poverty Reduction”. The researcher attempted to examine that agriculture contributes to 36 percent of Nepal's GDP and employs about 66 percent of the labor force. He also found that Nepal has lower productivity than neighboring countries due to subsistence farming, limited use of modern technology, limited irrigation, and unfavorable policies. He concluded that Nepal struggles with low agricultural productivity and poverty, making it hard to ensure enough food for everyone. Growing agriculture is key to solving these problems. Nepal can use its diverse land to grow specialized crops and improve farming methods. Short-term help, such as food programs, and long-term changes, such as better access to land, credit, and infrastructure, are needed. Strong government action and clear plans are essential to improving farming, reducing poverty, and creating a better future for all. Research was done by Chaudhary (2015) on "Agriculture Education for Rural Development in Nepal". It has been noted that the agricultural sector serves as the lifeline of Nepal's economy as it accounts for the major contribution towards the GDP. This is because most people earn their living through agriculture in Nepal. However, there are certain hurdles that hinder effective performance of the agricultural sector such as out-of-date curriculum, lack of adequate infrastructure and limited practical knowledge among farmers that result into inefficient agricultural sector. This may also be attributed to ineffective contribution from the agricultural sector towards the GDP. Improved educational system that involves more practical learning within the agricultural context can improve the efficiency of the sector.

Adhikari (2015) conducted research on “Contribution of Agriculture Sector to National Economy of Nepal”. In this study, he pointed out that agriculture is of key importance to the national economy. In Nepal, agriculture has been contributing 70 percent to household income and 35.12 percent to the national gross domestic product. Through which we can know that agriculture has high value in the Nepalese economy. The researcher also mentioned that the government has started focusing on Nepal's agriculture. The government started allocating part of the budget to the agricultural sector.

The study concluded that government spending on agriculture is very important to the country's GDP. In fact, every unit of money spent on agriculture could potentially add more than 101 units to the GDP, according to the data analyzed. Despite this importance, the government doesn't allocate a large share of its budget to agriculture. Only about 3 percent of the national budget goes to agriculture, which puts pressure on efforts to meet farmers' growing needs.



Research on the subject of “Assessing the Contribution of Agriculture for Boosting Nepalese Economy” has been done by Poudel et al. (2021). In his findings, he speaks about agriculture as the main sector of the economy of Nepal. It involves over 60 percent of the population of the country and contributes to over 27 percent of GDP. It is an important part of solving the problem of poverty in the country, as well as creating employment opportunities and food security for all citizens. The research finds that agriculture is very important for the economy of Nepal. It gives most people employment and makes a considerable contribution to income creation. Nevertheless, there are numerous issues associated with agriculture in Nepal, including traditional farming practices and lack of assistance from different organizations. This can be solved through proper involvement of the government into the processes of development of this sector of economy.

Jha et al. (2021) carried out research about "Analyzing the Growth and Performance of the Agriculture Sector in Nepal". This study revealed that there has been a substantial fall in the contribution made by agriculture sector to GDP from 80 percent in 1980 to 26.98 percent in 2090. The global participation of Nepal in crops like rice and wheat is very poor. The research concluded that agriculture is important to the economic condition of Nepal and is an important source of livelihood of majority of people.

Adhikari (2024) carried out research about "Agricultural Trade Deficit and its Implications for Nepalese Economy". From this research it was seen that trade deficit of Nepal greatly affects GDP and national income of the country, as the country imports substantially greater than what it exports. Exports are additions to the value of GDP whereas imports are subtractions, and thus trade deficit of Nepal greatly lowers the GDP and the income level of the nation. Therefore, it can be said that trade deficit is vital to boost GDP and national income.

Subsequently, the study “Revitalization of the Nepalese Agriculture Sector for Economic Prosperity: Gap Analysis between Agricultural GDP and Investment Trends” was done by Thapa (2024). According to this study, although there is an increase in the production of agriculture in terms of quantity, the contribution of agriculture in the GDP of Nepal has consistently been decreasing because of increasing inefficiencies in implementation policies and resource allocations. Government-related problems like corruption and instability have also been highlighted in the research. The study further states that other problems in agriculture include climate change, unpredictable rainfall, and lack of infrastructure. Finally, it highlights the importance of revitalization of agriculture in Nepal, which is important for ensuring economic prosperity, reducing poverty, and ensuring food security. The research indicates that the Nepalese government and stakeholders should focus on establishing modern practices in agriculture along with infrastructure, value chain, Access to Finance (A2F), financial literacy, improved governance, and collaboration among stakeholders (Lamichhane, 2023).

4. Data Presentation and Analysis

Total GDP and Agricultural Contribution to GDP in Nepal

The following table provides information on total GDP and the contribution of GDP growth in different years.

Table 1: *Contribution of Agriculture in the GDP of Nepal*

Fiscal Year	GDP (in million NPR)	Growth Rate (%)	Agriculture GDP (in million NPR)	Growth Rate (%)	Share of Agriculture in GDP (%)
2010	1,559,223	4.8	480,326	3.2	30.81
2011	1,612,674	3.4	496,000	3.3	30.76
2012	1,689,000	4.8	512,000	3.2	30.31
2013	1,758,000	4.1	528,000	3.1	30.03
2014	1,863,000	6	544,000	3	29.20
2015	1,924,000	3.3	560,000	2.9	29.11
2016	1,935,000	0.6	576,000	2.9	29.77
2017	2,094,000	8.2	592,000	2.8	28.27
2018	2,253,000	7.6	608,000	2.7	26.99
2019	2,403,000	6.7	624,000	2.6	25.97
2020	2,346,000	-2.4	640,000	2.6	27.28
2021	2,460,000	4.8	656,000	2.5	26.67
2022	2,579,070	5.6	680,667	3.8	26.39
2023	2,678,836	1.95	701,396	3	26.18

Source: Nepal Rastra Bank, 2023; World Bank Development Indicators, 2023.

Figure 1:

Contribution of Agriculture in the GDP of Nepal in Different Years

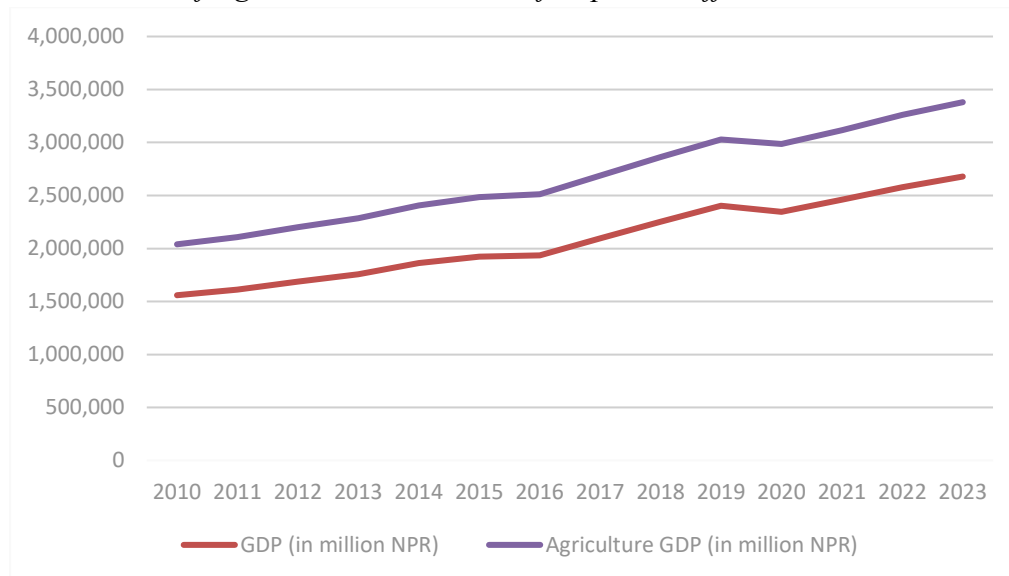


Figure 1 above clearly illustrates that the GDP of Nepal has continued to grow over time, with an increase from 1,559,223 million NPR in 2010 to 2,678,836 million NPR in 2023. The increment is an indication of economic development in Nepal due to growth in all aspects of its economy. Nevertheless, the process of growth has not been easy, and there have been both instances of good growth like 6% in 2014, and instances of bad growth like -2.4% in 2020. The fall in 2020 might be attributed to the impact of the coronavirus on economic activities globally. Nevertheless, Nepal has managed to bounce back to achieve 4.8% growth in 2021.



The agricultural sector, historically an important sector in Nepal, has also witnessed growth on an absolute basis. The GDP contributed by the agriculture sector rose from 480,326 million NPR in 2010 to 701,396 million NPR in 2023, demonstrating that agricultural production is increasing. However, the contribution of agriculture to the overall GDP has been declining steadily, from 30.81 percent in 2010 to 26.18 percent in 2023. This development demonstrates that there is an economic evolution occurring in Nepal in the form of shifting contributions from agriculture to other industries.

Even after experiencing declining shares, agriculture still plays an important role in ensuring the stability of Nepal's economy. Agricultural production in the country maintains steady growth rate figures at 2.5 percent to 3.5 percent per year. For example, despite the economic recession experienced by Nepal in 2020, agriculture still posted a growth rate of 2.6 percent. This indicates the contribution made by agriculture to the Nepalese economy, which is evidenced by food security, job generation, and the provision of livelihood. This explains the reason for calling agriculture the backbone of Nepal's economy.

Declining contributions made by agriculture to Nepal's GDP may create inequalities for the rural population that depends on agriculture. As other sectors develop in Nepal, poor growth in agriculture may result in disparity between rural and urban economies. The rural economy depends on agriculture, not only as a source of income but also as a means of livelihood. There are chances of exposing these economies due to lack of growth in agriculture. For this reason, there should be investments in modern agricultural practices, irrigation, and development of agro-based industries.

The transition of the Nepalese economy towards diversification is definitely a step in the right direction regarding its development. The rise of industries and services can result in job creation, income generation, and better living standards for the country. But while undertaking this process, Nepal should keep in mind the balance in growth and not neglect agriculture because there could be certain issues like food insecurity, unemployment in rural areas, and even increased inequality. Therefore, the agriculture sector needs to be developed by introducing proper policies.

As we see, this study helped us find out about different aspects of Nepal's economy, including some threats but also possibilities that need to be taken into account. Despite the fact that agriculture plays a crucial role in the country's development, it seems that its share has been decreasing. Therefore, combining efforts to develop agriculture with the development of other sectors, the Nepalese economy can reach sustainable growth.

5. Findings of the study

The report also showed that GDP of Nepal increased remarkably from the year 2010 to 2023, from 1,559,223 million NPR to 2,678,836 million NPR respectively, indicating economic progression. But on the contrary, there was a reduction in the contribution of the agricultural sector towards the GDP percentage from 30.81 percent to 26.18 percent despite a growth in contribution in terms of absolute figure from 480,326 million NPR to 701,396 million NPR. This indicates that although agriculture is a significant contributor, other economic sectors are



growing at a faster pace. In addition, the growth rate of agriculture did not change much over time from 2.5 percent to 3.5 percent. Interestingly, the agricultural sector even experienced steady growth despite negative growth of the economy in the year 2020.

The findings show that the contribution of agriculture to GDP in Nepal is clear proof of agriculture's importance as a basic pillar of Nepal's economy. Besides being the means through which employment and provision of food security is obtained for many people in the country, agriculture contributes greatly to the survival of people living in the rural areas. During the period between 2010 to 2023, the GDP of Nepal experienced growth which is an indication of progress and stability in economic terms.

It has been found that though the absolute contribution of agriculture to the GDP has risen, the share of agriculture to the economy has fallen from 30.81 percent in 2010 to 26.18 percent in 2023. This decline can be attributed to the structural changes that are witnessed in other countries during their development where diversification causes reduced dependence on the primary sector. On the other hand, it is important to note that agriculture has shown consistency in experiencing growth even in times of recession like in the case of 2020.

Though resilient, the article highlights some issues within the agriculture sector such as minimal usage of advanced technologies, inadequate infrastructure for irrigation, and exposure to risks from external forces like climate change. The lack of modernization and allocation of little budget to the agriculture sector has further hindered its development. These problems must be sorted out because apart from improving agricultural production, they will ensure the growth of rural areas where agriculture plays a major role.

Additionally, the results of this study highlight the significance of agriculture, not only on account of its share in the GDP, but also on the basis of its impact on poverty alleviation, food security, and development in general. It is due to its development that the gap between the developed cities and underdeveloped rural regions can be addressed through enhancing the economy of the rural regions. Consequently, the focus of this study needs to be put on the impact and importance of the development of agriculture in Nepal's overall developmental context. Therefore, in order to promote economic growth in Nepal, the Nepalese government should enhance institution building, reform public financial management, utilize resources effectively (hydropower, agricultural modernization, tourism, workforce), build human capacity, conduct economic diplomacy, and encourage startup ecosystems.

6. Conclusion, Discussion, and Policy Implications

Discussion

The primary objective of this research paper is to identify how agriculture contributes to the economic growth of Nepal. In this context, the modernization and commercialization of agriculture have to be promoted through appropriate policies that have a positive influence on economic growth and the regional economy, in accordance with the studies (Van Zanten et al., 2014). Likewise, poverty reduction, sustainable economic growth, and GDP growth will occur because of the sustainable development of agriculture. As such, the conclusions of this paper agree with the results of the literature review (Adhikari, 2015). Agriculture has long been a



source of employment and poverty reduction. In addition, the agricultural sector has contributed significantly towards enhancing employment opportunities in rural and semi-rural areas. In this regard, the above statement is supported by several studies conducted in recent times (Lamichhane, 2022; Thapa, 2024). Since the focus of the government was mainly on agriculture to increase the productivity, the increasing demand for food security and improvement in the well-being of small and marginalized farmers can be ensured (Dhungana & Ghimire, 2023).

Thus, in order to ensure sustainable economic growth in the case of Nepal, the government should create a good environment for income generation activities, investments in agriculture sector, the development of agro-based small and medium scale enterprises (SME), social, economic, educational and political empowerment, entrepreneurship development and improvement in health, education, environment for agricultural development, thereby enhancing economic growth (Lamichhane, 2026). The creation of a conducive business environment will help to promote new ventures, thus increasing peoples' income levels, alleviating poverty and economic growth. An increase in AD causes an increase in investment, production, employment and income, causing a high growth rate, which is akin to the Keynesian income determination theory (1936). Similarly, an increase in savings, investments, demand for money and supply of money cause a rise in economic growth of the country, which is IS-LM income determination model of J.R Hicks (1939).

Conclusion

The primary objectives of this research are to investigate the contribution of agriculture to economic growth in Nepal. The contribution of agriculture to the Nepalese economy, which is highly significant to employment, food production, and economic stability. Nevertheless, the falling contribution of agriculture to the GDP shows that Nepal is shifting towards becoming an industrialized nation where the service sector is becoming increasingly dominant. The development is good for economic growth, but there are inherent dangers associated with it, especially for rural communities whose livelihood depends on agriculture.

To overcome such threats, there is a need for appropriate interventions. Investment in the use of modern technologies in agriculture, efficient irrigation facilities, and processing units will go a long way in improving the efficiency of agriculture and adding value to it. Market linkages and availability of financing options for farmers are important aspects as well. In addition, there is a need for policies that can contribute to climate-resilient agriculture.

Moreover, the integration of agriculture with other industries, like tourism and manufacturing, will help open new opportunities for development. For instance, agro-tourism and export of agricultural products like tea, coffee, and cardamom are beneficial ways to raise the earnings of farmers while simultaneously contributing to the nation's export activities. Additionally, public-private partnerships can help overcome financial and innovation gaps.

Furthermore, the Nepalese government needs to take measures to promote agriculture at a national level. This is possible by increasing the proportion of budget spent on agriculture and fixing the problems associated with implementing policies.



Furthermore, Nepal's economy is becoming diversified, and agriculture is going to be one of the key factors in the country's development. It would help to tackle the problems in the sector, as well as incorporate agriculture into the whole national economy. There is great potential for agriculture not only in promoting development in the countryside but also creating a strong foundation for the future.

In Nepal, the key problems of the Nepalese economy regarding GDP growth are low investment, low employment rate, low productivity and liquidity trap. Ultimately, agricultural activities help promote gender equality, create climate resilience, enhance nutrition and food security, boost economic growth, and cut down poverty rates.

Action implication

The government of Nepal needs to create a conducive atmosphere for the agriculture profession through proper policies and programs. There was improvement in the agriculture sector; and consistency in the growth of agriculture is important since it helps to stabilize prices and earns income. The factors that help promote agriculture include better use of agricultural inputs, technological development, availability of finances, agricultural value chain and infrastructure for agriculture development, and technological expertise, which entail heavy budget allocation and institution policies. Such commitment will come from the relevant integrated policy framework that will champion for the voice of sustainable agricultural financing. Agricultural financing has always been an integral component of agricultural development programs.

Furthermore, this paper develops a basis for concept lenses, logical explanation, trend, and the position of economic growth. Further research on this topic may be carried out with the help of a primary data gathering approach which will enable researchers to collect information first-hand from the poor, small farmers, entrepreneurs, women entrepreneurs, government officials, and investors in terms of their perceptions related to agriculture development and GDP growth. The results obtained from this paper will form the benchmark for GDP growth. In this way, decision makers, regulators, agro-economists, sociologists, academia, scholars, and others may use the results obtained from this paper to develop a strategic framework (SF) for economic growth.

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