

LAND REFORM IN NEPAL: CONCEPTS, MODELS, POLICIES AND IMPLEMENTATION

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Abstract

Land reform in Nepal remains a complex and pressing issue, deeply intertwined with political, social, and economic factors. Initially implemented through the Lands Act of 1964, land reform aimed to ensure equitable land distribution, protect tenant rights, and promote agricultural productivity. Despite its ambitious goals, the implementation has been inconsistent, with significant gaps between policy, law, and practice. This study uses a mixed-methods approach, combining household surveys and interviews with secondary data, to analyze land ownership patterns and the relationship between landholders and tenants in Changunarayan Municipality, Bhaktapur. Key challenges include ineffective enforcement of land ceilings, unresolved dual ownership conflicts, and limited success in increasing agricultural productivity. Political manipulation and lack of coordination among stakeholders have further undermined reform efforts, often reducing land reform to a political slogan rather than a developmental initiative. Recent policies, such as the National Land Policy, 2075 B.S. and Land Use Act, 2076 B.S., emphasize sustainable land management and socio-economic inclusivity, but their success depends on harmonized legal frameworks and effective implementation. Nepal must address underlying structural issues, balance ownership with productivity, and align reform efforts with broader economic and social goals to achieve meaningful outcomes.

Keywords: Land Reform, Agricultural Productivity, National Land Policy, Dual Ownership, Tenant and Tenancy Rights.

Introduction

Land reform is a continuously emerging and pressing issue in Nepali politics, as well as in intellectual and academic spheres. Land reform is not a new topic in Nepal. It is a highly debated and deeply rooted issue in Nepali politics. It often becomes a subject of public interest and discussion. Land reform is a multidimensional and complex concept. It also serves as a foundation for social transformation. One of the

main principles of land reform is preventing unequal land distribution. Globally, there are various models and theories of land reform. In socialist countries, collectivization is the primary characteristic, while in capitalist countries, privatization plays a key role (Kandel, 2009).

Land reform has been a pressing issue in Nepal since 1951. Reforms undertaken in this field have so far concentrated on the relationship between the landholder and the cultivator and have primarily assumed the forms of the regulation of rents and security of tenancy rights. This is undoubtedly an important aspect of the land reform problem. Nevertheless, this relationship is to a large extent determined by the form and condition of the tenure under which the land owner is able to obtain the land from the state. Accordingly, in the absence of the proper knowledge of the existing system of land tenure and taxation, tenant-landholders relationships tend to be diverse from their proper origin and context and viewed solely against physical backgrounds and ideals of social justice (Regmi, 1978).

Land reform is a major step aimed at transforming the socio-economic aspects, especially by introducing suitable changes in the institutional structure of agricultural development in Nepal. Nepal's land reform program, introduced in 1964 (Bikram Sambat 2021), is considered a classical model of land reform. This model emphasizes the equitable distribution of land (Kandel, 2009). Nepal's Lands Act of 1964 was a comprehensive step forward in this direction (Zaman, 1973). Land reform seeks to address the issue of protecting tenant rights and formalizing their land tenure by establishing cultivation requirements and promoting secure land tenure, thereby encouraging sustainable agricultural practices (Dorner, 1972, 1977; King, 1974). Scholars like Dorner (1972) argue for integrating economic and social goals within land reform, suggesting that the conflict lies not between justice and efficiency but between the existing ownership structure and development needs. The aim is to achieve broader social equality and economic justice, recognizing that ownership incentives alone may not always lead to productive outcomes, especially in areas with low land productivity (p. 12). Land reform also impacts broader economic development by enhancing agricultural productivity, employment opportunities, and facilitating labor shifts from agriculture to industry (p. 13).

Land reform is a multifaceted and intricate issue, especially in the context of Nepal, where it has been a long standing topic of political discourse and public debate. Traditionally, land reform has often been simplified to the redistribution of land, but its significance extends far beyond this narrow definition. As articulated by Shahi (2018), land reform embodies the border aspirations for agricultural development, which

encompasses industrialization, job creation, poverty reduction and the promotion of inclusion and equality. The effectiveness of land reform depends on adequately addressing land issues; without resolving these underlying problems achieving positive outcomes remains challenging.

In Nepal, two primary perspectives on land reform have emerged, the first advocates for redistributing land to landless and poor farmers, often through confiscation or compensation for those exceeding land ceiling limits. This view gained prominence with the Maoist movements' call for agrarian revolution. The second perspective rooted in new liberal ideology, rejects land redistribution in favor of commercializing agriculture based on market principles. This approach was central to the long term agricultural plan from 1995 to 2016 AD which focused on commercialization while sidelining land reform and poverty-targeted programs. However, this strategy proved ineffective in addressing Nepal's land related issues.

Differing perspectives on land reform

Land reform is a complex concept with no universally accepted definition, theory, or understanding. Interpretations of land reform vary between individuals and nations, leading to inconsistent implementation. In Nepal, public perception often equates land reform with redistributing land ownership to those without land. This includes transferring land rights from large landholders to the landless, a notion that has become synonymous with land distribution.

However, this narrow interpretation limits the broader purpose of land reform. While providing land ownership to the landless is one aspect, land reform should be understood as a multidimensional and comprehensive concept. Its ultimate aim is the scientific utilization of land through equitable distribution, proper development, and effective use to maximize agricultural production and productivity.

The broader goals of land reform include achieving national self-sufficiency in food, maintaining trade balance by exporting surplus agricultural products, earning foreign exchange, and improving the overall economic conditions of the country. While the principles, policies, and laws related to land reform in Nepal align closely with its theoretical objectives, challenges arise due to inconsistent understanding, narrow interpretations, and political influences.

In many cases, responsible authorities and stakeholders fail to approach land reform with a holistic perspective. At times, they oversimplify the issue, or conversely, overcomplicate it, making land reform a subject of confusion and limitation.

Consequently, land reform in Nepal has become more of a political tool than a technical or economic initiative.

Land reform's objectives—such as ensuring land rights and ownership for all citizens, providing secure and organized housing, facilitating farmers' access to land, sustainable infrastructure development, and ensuring food security—are addressed in Nepal's National Land Policy, 2075 B.S. This policy aims to achieve economic prosperity through the optimal use and management of land resources.

The policy emphasizes land management as a means of achieving broader goals, such as poverty reduction due to climate change impacts, gender equality, environmental protection, and sustainable solutions to land ownership and access issues. However, achieving these objectives requires a shift from the current focus on political agendas to a more pragmatic approach emphasizing technical and economic aspects.

In summary, while land reform in Nepal is often reduced to a simplistic narrative of land distribution, its actual scope encompasses much more. True land reform involves creating systems for the scientific use of land, equitable distribution, and increasing agricultural productivity to ensure national economic growth and sustainability.

The objectives of the research presented in this paper is: to critically analyze the evolution, policies, and implementation of land reform in Nepal. The study explores the connection between land ownership patterns and also the relationship between landholders and tenants on the basis of household survey conducted in Changunarayan Municipality, Bhaktapur.

Research methodology

This study utilized a mixed-methods approach, combining primary and secondary data to investigate land ownership and tenancy in Changunarayan Municipality, Bhaktapur district. Primary data were collected through household surveys and interviews, targeting 200 households selected via purposive sampling. This non-probability method enabled the focused inclusion of landholders and tenant-landholders. Secondary data were sourced from local published and unpublished documents and relevant literature.

The sampling design ensured that participants were chosen based on specific criteria such as land ownership and tenancy status, which were central to the study's objectives. The emphasis on primary data provided insights into the practical implications of land reform policies and the socio-economic dynamics of agriculture in the study area. Data analysis included both qualitative responses and quantitative indicators, offering a comprehensive understanding of the challenges faced by the agricultural community.

Methods of land reform

Land reform encompasses various approaches, each shaped by differing political ideologies, economic priorities, and social contexts. Based on the leading authorities on land reform, these methods can be categorized as follows:

1. State-led land reform

The state-led method emphasizes the government's pivotal role in determining land reform's success. According to this approach, whether land reform succeeds or fails is primarily attributed to government efforts. The effectiveness of state-directed land reform often depends on the level of government assistance during the transition of land ownership.

Nepal's state-driven land reform is rooted in three key theoretical principles: fostering economic development by redirecting dormant capital and population pressure from agriculture to non-agricultural sectors, ensuring fair distribution of arable land alongside agricultural resources and services to enhance the livelihoods of genuine land-dependent farmers, and promoting maximum agricultural productivity to secure public welfare and broader economic benefits (Preamble of the Land Act, 1964).

2. Land reform based on movements

Movement-based land reform emerges from grassroots mobilization and organized farmer revolts. These movements are typically a response to systemic inequality, exploitation, or government inaction. Farmers advocate for equitable land redistribution through protests, strikes, and other forms of collective action. Historical examples include agrarian revolutions in Latin America and Asia, as well as the Maoist movement in Nepal. While such movements can drive significant change, they are often politically volatile and may result in conflict or inconsistent outcomes.

3. Market-led land reforms

Market-led reforms are primarily driven by international institutions like the World Bank and emphasize minimal state involvement. Redistribution of land occurs through voluntary transactions between willing buyers and willing sellers, with the state acting as a facilitator by providing financial incentives, such as subsidies or loans. The neoliberal ideology behind this approach prioritizes economic efficiency and productivity over addressing social inequalities. The "willing buyer, willing

seller” concept is central to this method. However, critics argue that market-led reforms often fail to address structural inequalities, as marginalized groups may lack the financial capacity to participate in these transactions.

4. Market-based land reforms

Market-based reforms involve a stronger regulatory role for the state within a market framework. These reforms aim to balance market efficiency with social equity by setting conditions for land transactions, such as fair pricing mechanisms and redistribution policies. Historical examples include revolutionary reforms in countries like China, Vietnam, Cuba, and North Korea, where state-regulated markets played a significant role in improving living standards. Unlike market-led reforms, market-based approaches recognize the need for state oversight to ensure fairness and inclusivity (Kandel, 2009).

Lands Act, 1964 and land reform

The Land Act of 1964 was a pivotal legislative effort in Nepal aimed at reforming land distribution and promoting agricultural development. It abolished the *zamindari* system, which had concentrated land ownership among elites, and introduced ceilings on landholdings—6.6 hectares for agricultural land and 0.66 hectares for homesteads. Surplus land was to be acquired by the government, with compensation provided to former owners, and redistributed to marginalized groups such as *Dalits*, ethnic communities, and freed bonded laborers. The Act also sought to improve the livelihoods of tenant farmers by securing their rights, regulating rent payments, and introducing rural savings schemes to mobilize resources for agricultural and non-agricultural development.

Despite its progressive framework, the Act faced significant implementation challenges. Corruption undermined the compulsory savings scheme, and political resistance from elites impeded efforts to enforce land ceilings and abolish intermediaries (Nepali, 2010). Amendments in 2053 B.S. aimed to eliminate dual ownership and promote the principle of "land to the tiller," but these reforms also faced limited success. Provisions for land consolidation and cooperative farming, intended to enhance productivity, were minimally implemented. While the Act laid a strong foundation for land reform, its effectiveness has been constrained by governance issues, weak enforcement, and evolving socio-economic conditions (Regmi, 1977).

Provisions relating to land reforms in different constitutions of Nepal

The constitutions of Nepal have progressively incorporated provisions for land reform, reflecting the evolving socio-political priorities of the country. Early frameworks, such as the Legal Code of 2004 B.S., lacked significant mention of land reform. The Interim Governance Act of 2007 B.S. introduced the concept of scientific land reform but did not result in substantial changes. The Constitution of Nepal, 2015 B.S., focused on equitable resource distribution to promote regional balance and economic development. Similarly, the Constitution of Nepal, 2072 B.S., emphasized preventing economic exploitation and promoting agricultural productivity through land reform programs (Nepali, 2010).

More recent constitutions have prioritized scientific land reform and social justice. The Interim Constitution of 2063 B.S. emphasized abolishing feudal land ownership and ensuring compensation for public-interest land acquisitions. The Constitution of Nepal, 2072 B.S., further strengthened these principles, granting farmers the right to land for agricultural activities and promoting land-use policies that prioritize productivity and environmental balance. It also included provisions for resettling freed bonded laborers and landless groups, aiming to improve their livelihoods and ensure social inclusion. Despite these progressive provisions, challenges remain in aligning constitutional goals with effective implementation (Updhyay, 2021).

Provisions of Land Use Policy, 2015

The Land Use Policy (LUP), 2015, focuses on sustainable and efficient land management by classifying land based on its utility and preventing improper usage. It emphasizes land consolidation, discourages fragmentation, and promotes agricultural land for farming purposes. The policy prioritizes the optimal use of land resources over ownership, aiming to balance socio-economic development with environmental sustainability. By regulating land use through zoning and planning, the policy seeks to address challenges like unmanaged settlements, deforestation, and the misuse of agricultural land.

However, the implementation of this policy has faced significant challenges, including weak regulatory frameworks, limited institutional capacity, and ineffective enforcement. These shortcomings have hindered the establishment of an equitable system for land distribution and resource management. The policy's goals align with international standards, but achieving them requires stronger coordination among stakeholders and better monitoring mechanisms. Addressing these issues is crucial for

realizing the policy's potential to support sustainable development and reduce socio-economic disparities (Subedi, 2016).

Provisions of National Land Policy, 2019

The National Land Policy, 2019, provides a comprehensive framework for addressing land-related issues in Nepal. It focuses on equitable access to land, security of tenure, and sustainable land management. The policy aims to redistribute government-owned unused land to landless groups, promote cooperative farming, and ensure women's access to land ownership. It is built on six pillars: tenure security, land access, land use, valuation and taxation, land acquisition, and modernization of land administration. The policy also addresses environmental challenges and promotes food sovereignty through sustainable agricultural practices (Adhikary, 2007).

Despite its forward-looking agenda, the policy faces challenges in implementation. Issues such as informal tenure, landlessness, and inadequate institutional capacity hinder its effectiveness. The policy's success depends on robust governance and the adoption of fit-for-purpose techniques in land administration. By addressing these gaps, the National Land Policy can serve as a critical tool for promoting social justice, reducing poverty, and achieving sustainable development in Nepal (Upreti, 2021).

Provisions of the Land Use Act of Nepal, 2019

The Land Use Act (LUA) of 2019 aims to ensure sustainable and optimal land management through classification, integrated use, and governance. It categorizes land into ten types, mandates the preparation of land-use maps and plans, and prohibits arbitrary land-use changes. The Act also emphasizes controlling land fragmentation, promoting land consolidation, and establishing land banks to enhance productivity. Institutional frameworks, including federal, provincial, and local land-use councils, are tasked with implementing these provisions (LUA, 2019).

While progressive in intent, the Act has faced criticism for potentially favoring corporate agriculture over smallholder farmers. Challenges such as weak coordination among government levels and the neglect of scientific land reform goals outlined in the 2015 Constitution have also been noted. Addressing these issues is essential to realizing the Act's potential to modernize land management and support inclusive development in Nepal.

Dual ownership of land and its impact on agricultural production

Dual ownership refers to a situation where both the tenant (*mohi*) and the landholder have equal rights over the same piece of land. This system was introduced with the aim of increasing land productivity. Ownership of land and agricultural production are two critical aspects of land reform, closely linked to the rights of tenants and production growth.

Some people interpret land reform solely as providing ownership rights, while others focus only on increasing agricultural production. Proponents of ownership argue that without ownership, agricultural production cannot flourish. They believe that access to arable land is essential, especially for genuine farmers. Genuine farmers means here, someone who personally engages in and depends primarily on farming for their livelihood, rather than holding land merely for investment or rental purposes. When cultivating land owned by someone else, farmers not only lack a sense of belonging but are also required to share half of their harvest with the landholder. This arrangement often fails to achieve the maximum productivity possible based on the land's capacity or fertility.

The primary reason is that tenant farmers, who have to surrender half of their produce to the landholder, may lack the motivation to invest additional effort and resources into increasing production. Similarly, landholders are also disinclined to invest in such land. Regardless of the effort or investment made to improve the land, they only receive half of the output produced. Increasing agricultural yields requires modern farming tools, quality seeds, fertilizers, pesticides, and significant labor, but dual ownership discourages both the tenant and the landholder from making such investments.

As a result, dual ownership—where one party owns the land while another provides the labor—fails to fulfill the objective of land reform, which is to enhance agricultural productivity. This situation leads to neither the scientific utilization of land nor the expected improvement in the living standards of genuine farmers. For farmers' lives to improve, they need security, independence, and access to creative opportunities.

Land reform cannot be deemed successful if it leaves the fundamental problems of farmers' agricultural practices unaddressed. Therefore, land reform must be viewed in conjunction with agricultural production to achieve its intended goals.

Conflict between tenants and landholders and its impact on agricultural production

In Nepal, after the implementation of the Land Act, 2021 B.S., the dual ownership system was introduced to protect the rights of tenant farmers. This provision helped actual farmers, who were directly involved in cultivation, to gain ownership rights over the land. For the first two decades after its introduction, agricultural production saw a steady increase. However, in later years, disputes and mistrust arose between the tenants (referred to as *mohi*) and the landholders (known as *talsing*), particularly over crop sharing and rent payments.

Tenant farmers often delayed or failed to deliver crops to the landholders on time, while some landholders refused to provide receipts for the crops received. These practices negatively impacted agricultural production. Tenants started seeking ownership through land distribution processes, while landholders resorted to legal measures to evict tenants or secure crop payments. This mutual distrust and disregard for responsibilities intensified conflicts, turning land and its yield into matters of access and prestige.

This polarization led to social divisions, with some advocating for tenants and others for landholders. In some areas, tenants held more power, while in others, landholders dominated. As a result, agricultural productivity became a secondary concern. Many lands remained uncultivated, and insufficient labor and investment on cultivated lands led to declining yields.

The conflicts escalated into political disputes, leading to an increase in court cases and administrative workloads related to land ownership. Farmers who should have been focusing on cultivation found themselves entangled in legal battles. Consequently, neither the tenants could secure land ownership nor the objectives of the Land Act, 2021 B.S.—to increase agricultural production—were fulfilled.

The campaign to abolish dual ownership began with land reform initiatives, which included provisions for distributing land between tenants and landholders. The fourth amendment to the Land Act in 2053 B.S. abolished tenant rights (*mohiyani hak*). According to Section 25(1) of the Act, except in cases where tenant rights had already been established, no individual could claim such rights over another person's land after the amendment. Tenants were given six months (until 2054 B.S.) to file applications for establishing their rights, and unresolved cases in courts were to be decided based on the laws in effect at that time.

Ownership of land typically creates a sense of belonging, increases access and prestige, and allows individuals to use the land as collateral or sell it to invest in other ventures. However, land ownership alone does not guarantee increased agricultural productivity. The primary goal of land reform—to maximize the use of arable land and achieve self-sufficiency in food production—remains unmet due to a disconnect between the Act's objectives and its implementation.

While dual ownership was abolished, the distribution of land between tenants and landholders remains incomplete. A significant portion of tenant-cultivated land remains arable, but in urban areas like the Kathmandu Valley, fertile lands are increasingly being converted into residential and commercial plots. Both tenants and landholders prefer to retain land as residential plots rather than agricultural land due to the higher valuation of residential property.

This shift has undermined agricultural development and the benefits of government subsidies and incentives for farming. Modern agricultural practices, including advanced tools, high-quality seeds, and scientific techniques, have proven that agricultural productivity can increase even without ownership. Yet, Nepal has not succeeded in developing agriculture as an industry.

The absence of youth labor due to migration to foreign employment markets like the Gulf countries and Malaysia, coupled with urban migration, has left much arable land fallow. The lack of investment in agriculture and the inefficient use of government subsidies and loans have further exacerbated the situation.

Policy and legal inconsistencies

In Nepal, there is a noticeable disconnect between policy frameworks and the legal provisions governing land management. A clear example of this is the disparity between Nepal's National Land Policy, 2075 and the provisions of the Land Act, 2021 (Eighth Amendment) regarding land use certificates and ownership rights.

According to Clause 2.3.1 of the National Land Policy, 2075, the government aims to provide organized housing for landless and marginalized families and grant them land use certificates in accordance with the law. Similarly, Clause 2.3.2 mentions issuing temporary land use rights for cultivable government land to landless and small-scale farmers for a specified period. This policy was approved by the Government of Nepal on 7th *Chaitra*, 2075 (March 21, 2019).

However, the Land Act, 2021 (Eighth Amendment 2020 B.S.), which came into effect on 28th *Magh*, 2076 (February 11, 2020), contradicts this policy. Provisions in Sections

52(*kha*) and 52(*ga*) of the Act allow for the transfer of full ownership rights to landless families and marginalized farmers. As a result, land ownership is being transferred outright, diverging from the policy's emphasis on providing only land use certificates.

This inconsistency between policy and law creates a contradictory framework, leading to confusion during implementation. While the policy promotes granting limited land use rights to ensure structured management of land resources, the law takes a more permanent approach by transferring full ownership. This gap raises questions about the government's coherence in addressing land reform objectives.

When policies lack clarity or conflict with legislation, it undermines public trust in governance. Even when policies are well-defined, conflicting legal provisions can create an environment of suspicion and skepticism. To ensure consistency, it is essential for policies and laws to align and complement each other. This alignment not only facilitates effective implementation but also builds confidence in the intentions and competence of policymakers.

In conclusion, resolving discrepancies between policies and laws, like those seen in Nepal's land management framework, is critical to achieving the intended objectives of land reform. Clear and harmonized policies and legislation are necessary to foster trust, reduce confusion, and create a conducive environment for equitable land distribution and efficient land use.

Lack of effectiveness in law implementation

Nepal's land reform initiatives began with promising steps, such as setting land ownership ceilings in 2021 B.S. (1964 A.D.) to redistribute surplus land to landless individuals. In the initial years, lands exceeding the ceiling were acquired by the government, often with compensation, and subsequently distributed to targeted groups. Efforts to seize undeclared or hidden lands were also relatively effective. However, in recent decades, the implementation of land ceiling regulations—particularly related to the submission of detailed land ownership declarations (commonly referred to as *Fatwari*)—has been inadequate.

Section 13 of the Land Act, 2021 mandates that designated authorities issue notices requiring landholders to submit land ownership declarations within 35 days if they own land exceeding the prescribed ceiling. Similarly, Rule 17 of the Land Rules, 2021 B.S. assigns land reform officers the responsibility to enforce these provisions. While these measures were enforced effectively during the initial years following their enactment, their implementation has dwindled over time.

Early enforcement of the land ceiling regulations, including the submission of *Fatwari*, was vigorous, with notices issued, declarations submitted, and investigations conducted. Surplus land identified through these investigations was redistributed to targeted groups or communities as stipulated by the law. Cases of landholders attempting to conceal details in their *Fatwari* were met with confiscation of undeclared land. However, since the 2040s (1980s A.D.), activities related to investigating, confiscating, and redistributing surplus land have nearly ceased.

The current state of land ceiling enforcement is disappointing, reflecting broader challenges in implementing land reform measures effectively. Other critical provisions of the Land Act, 2021 B.S., such as ending dual ownership, controlling fragmentation of arable land, promoting agricultural productivity, and improving the living standards of genuine farmers, have not received adequate attention.

Although Nepal's land reform initiatives have made some progress in providing land ownership to the landless, they have fallen short in achieving the broader objective of increasing agricultural production and productivity. If land reform is envisioned as a dual-pillar system—one pillar being ownership distribution and the other being agricultural productivity—the weak state of the latter undermines the overall success of land reform.

To address these shortcomings, a comprehensive and integrated approach is necessary. Land reform efforts must go beyond ownership redistribution and focus on strengthening agricultural productivity, ensuring food security, and enhancing economic outcomes. Harmonizing principles, policies, laws, and implementation practices is essential. This requires adopting innovative thinking, strategic planning, and a robust implementation mechanism that ensures meaningful and sustainable land reform.

Comments on land reform in Nepal

The discourse and critiques surrounding land reform in Nepal underscore significant weaknesses and complexities in its principles, policies, laws, and implementation processes. Key criticisms include its limitation to political popularity, serving more as a slogan than substantive action, and its portrayal as an endless and unsolvable issue. Stakeholders' needs were often sidelined in favor of influential individuals' interests, while discussions on land reform overshadowed tangible implementation efforts. The endeavor is often seen as an intellectual exercise with minimal practical application, hindered further by a lack of coordination among policies, laws, and programs. Critics have likened land reform to an aimless journey, characterized by fragmented understanding and misaligned goals. It has been accused of serving as a

tool for maintaining political power, benefiting the elite, and being perceived as reform for others rather than those in positions of authority. The implementation process has been marked by complexity, limited success, and negligible positive impacts, with land reform seen as easier to discuss than execute. The dominance of self-serving elites further undermines its intent. These critiques highlight the pressing need for introspection, transparency, inclusivity, and strategic reforms to achieve meaningful and equitable land reform in Nepal (Dahal, 2020).

Finding from household survey

The field study reveals significant shortcomings in the implementation of land reform policies within Changuarayan Municipality. A vast majority (95%) of respondents indicated that these policies have failed to impact the agricultural profession effectively, citing their limited application beyond documentation. Additionally, 90% of farmers reported feeling neither self-reliant nor respected, with dual land ownership and insufficient capital investment acting as major barriers to agricultural development. Despite generally cooperative social relationships between tenants and landholders, both groups lacked the motivation and resources to invest in improving agricultural productivity.

Conclusion

Among various aspects of land reform in Nepal, the achievements in land ceiling enforcement have been particularly weak. The limited acquisition of surplus land highlights the ineffectiveness of implementation. While some progress was made in seizing and redistributing concealed land during the land declaration process (*7 number fatwari*), success in this regard has been minimal. Similarly, land tenancy reform has also seen limited achievements.

Overall, Nepal's land reform efforts have yielded outcomes that are far from satisfactory. Despite some commendable provisions in policies and laws, ineffective implementation has led to growing dependence on imported food, dissatisfaction, and distrust among the general population. The lack of alignment between principles, policies, laws, and practices has hindered any significant positive impact of land reform.

Land reform in Nepal, which began nearly 75 years ago, gained momentum in 1964 but slowed significantly from the 1980s onward. Currently, the issue has become more of a political agenda than a legal or technical matter. If the current approach persists, land reform could remain an unresolved and contentious issue for another 75 years. This situation fails to benefit genuine tiller farmers or ensure the preservation and optimal use of arable land, let alone improve agricultural productivity.

Effective reform requires not just sound policies and methods but also their meaningful implementation. Therefore, it is essential to understand and communicate the broader implications of land reform. Policies, laws, and practices must be harmonized with the spirit, objectives, and principles of reform.

The observation by scholar Edmundo Flores (1970) that "Land Reform is not only distributing land to men but also distributing men to land" is also highly relevant to Nepal's context as 25%(1,030,000 ha.) of total arable land (4,121,000 ha.) in Nepal is left uncultivated. This shows that in Nepal's context it has failed in distributing men to land. Alongside land ownership, there is an urgent need to mobilize human resources to increase land productivity. Reform that focuses solely on providing ownership, while leaving land fallow and unproductive, is neither practical nor suitable for Nepal. Comprehensive and meaningful reforms are imperative for ensuring that land reform addresses both ownership and productive use of land effectively.

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