CHAPTER 5

**LAND USE AND AGRICULTURE**

The Ministry of Agriculture and Forests (MoAF), over the past four decades, was concerned about “how to grow” by establishing various agriculture infrastructures to produce and distribute the inputs. Currently the MoAF established four main Renewable Natural Resources (RNR) research centers.

The MoAF with the accumulated experiences having accomplished one five year plan to the other, maintains the three basic objectives that are to i) conserve the environment, ii) enhance the rural income and iii) attain self-reliance in cereals and essential oil crops. In 2016, Agriculture contributed 16.52 percent to the total economy i.e. as measured by the Gross Domestic Product. It was also the single largest sector that provides livelihood over 58 percent of the population as per Labour Force Survey 2015.

Agricultural practices have changed tremendously over the years. Until a decade ago, agriculture was practiced on a subsistence basis. Whatever was produced on the farm was consumed having little or no marketable surplus. The farm production is supplemented by keeping different kinds of domestic animals such as cattle for draught and milking purpose, chicken for eggs and pigs for meat etc. At higher altitudes, herds of yaks and sheep are also kept for draught and milking.

Owing to the improved communication facilities in the country, there is an increasing tendency to go for cash crops like apples in the temperate north; oranges, areca nut and cardamom in the subtropical south. Other cash crops that are exported include ginger, chilies and vegetables.

Strategies to increase livestock and cereal production include the propagation and practice of double cropping of the paddy production and distribution of high yield varieties. In the livestock sector the artificial insemination covers not only for the Jersey breeds that are high yielding but also for the production of Jatsa and Jatsam that are local high yielding varieties. As a result, increasing number of farms is mechanized with sizable investment on the machinery and other inputs that are subsidized by the government.

The issue is not only to formulate well-balanced agricultural policies and the response shown by the farmers to the designed policies and also to monitor the progress. To do this, a good statistical database, giving the trends or time series is required.

Back in 1988/89, the National Agronomic Survey was carried out in collaboration with the then Department of Agriculture. Though the MoAF conducted nation-wide sample surveys called RNR Census in 2009, but the major source of data presented in this chapter are from the Bhutan RNR Statistics 2016 and administrative records maintained by different departments under the MoAF.