#### **CHAPTER 5: LAND USE AND AGRICULTURE**

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he ministry of Agriculture, over the past four decades, was concerned about “ how to grow” by establishing various agriculture infrastructures to produce and distribute the inputs. Currently the Ministry of Agriculture established 4 main RNR research centers. The Ministry of Agriculture with the accumulated experience having accomplished one five year plan to the other maintains the three basic objectives that is to conserve the environment, enhance the rural income and attain the self reliance in cereals and essential oil crops. In 2001, Agriculture contributed 26.7% of share to the total economy i.e., as measured by the Gross Domestic Product. It was also the single largest sector that provides livelihood to 79% of the population.

The agricultural practice has changed tremendously over the years. Until a decade ago, agriculture was practiced on a subsistence basis. What ever was produced on the farm was consumed having 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 the cereal production, includes the propagation and practice of double cropping of the paddy production and distribution of high yield verities. In the livestock sector the artificial insemination covers not only for the Jersey breeds that are high yielding but also for the production of Jatsha and Jatsam that are local high yield 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 designed policies but 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. Since then no systematic survey has been conducted.The Ministry of Agriculture conducts a nation wide sample surveys and the major source of Agricultural data is now available from the National Agricultural Census that was conducted in 2000. These surveys and censuses besides the regular administrative data are the sources of data on the sector.