



IMPACT STORY

DEVELOPING THE EXPERTISE OF MACHINE OPERATORS TO SUPPORT SUSTAINABLE MECHANISATION



Photo: Manisha Shrestha

The effect of the COVID-19 pandemic especially on smallholder farmers indicates an urgent need for recovery steps to be introduced, which can alleviate their stress and help them resolve emerging challenges. From seasonal farm workers not being able to work, to smallholder farmers not being able to access agricultural machinery or sell their perishable produce, restrictions on the movement of people and vehicles have had a significant effect on Nepal's marginal and smallholder farmers.

In this situation, the acceptance of agricultural practices that can help to enhance the food and nutrition protection of individual households is of paramount importance. There is also an increasing realization of the need to mechanize the agriculture sector, especially due to the shortage of manpower and restrictions on mobility.



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The Roadmaps project in collaboration with provincial governments of Province 1 and 2, PMAMP and Agriculture Machinery Testing and Research Center (AMTRC) successfully conducted a four-day training between the 1st - 4th December 2020, focusing on capacity development of operators for improved technical ability to operate agricultural machines like Laser Land Leveler, Zero Till Seed Drill and Happy Seeder at AMTRC, Nawalpur in Province 2. The main objective of this training was to develop technical skills of machine operators in sustainable agriculture for improving their employability as well as the livelihoods of smallholder farmers.

Agricultural equipment operators handle various machinery as well as undertake troubleshooting and attend to their maintenance. The job demands knowledge, skill and machine operating dexterity. Understanding these needs, a comprehensive “Operator Capacity Development Training” was conducted for four days, where AMTRC and Nepal Agriculture Research Council (NARC) Scientists came together providing logistic support, technical expertise, machineries and facilitation. A total of 19 participants attended, from Provinces 1, 2 and 3.

The training was run under COVID-safe practices including the use of masks, and a nurse was on site throughout the training to check for symptoms and temperatures.



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The first day of the training consisted of covering the objective of the training and the importance of the use of CASI agricultural machinery. Dividing the participants into two groups, lead trainer Engineer Ramnath Jha, Chief of AMTRC, started the operators' training from the demonstration of Laser Land Leveller moving on to the Zero Till Seed Drill and Happy Seeder in the following days. On the last day, a closing program was held where certificates were distributed to all the participants.

As a main trainer of this Operators' Training, Engineer Ramnath Jha believes that these trainings are needed to help farmers who are heartily committed to mechanization and are already operating such equipment, because they will now be able to ensure the machine is operating safely and effectively, and know how to do light repair when required. Mr Jha is deeply convinced that such type of training is essential for agricultural development and to appeal to younger farmers "Young people should see future in farming, and we should help generate employment for youth," he strongly believes.

Under the Roadmaps project, through teaming up with provincial governments of Province 1 and 2, a platform has been created for the government, partners and stakeholders to discuss, maintain better coordination and facilitation to create an enabling environment for sustainable agriculture mechanization which is needed to achieve timeliness in field operations, increase productivity, reduce cost of production and minimize farm drudgery. It also helps save labor and energy, reducing the cultivation cost. Therefore, sustainable agricultural machine operators are the ones who will bring a big impact to the future of smallholder farming systems in Nepal.

“A good quality training.... very effective. I liked Laser Land Leveler training the most because it was completely new to me. It was interesting for me to know about its computerized system and all other technical aspects.”

*-Nischal Tamang Ministry of Land Management, Agriculture and Cooperatives,
Morang, Province 1*