

Common Property Resources: Degradation, Management and Contribution to Farm Income and Employment in Western Himalayan Region (Himachal Pradesh)

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Common Property Resources (CPRs) are important natural resources which enhance and stabilise the income, employment and sustenance of a village community. The multistage stratified random sampling technique has been used. The average size of operational holding was 0.69 ha, indicating the increasing importance of common access resources (land). The net returns could be increased substantially in low and mid hills zones with the optimum mix of farm enterprises and proper management of CPRs (land and water). About 56 to 88 per cent of the sample households used CPR lands for collection of leaves for litter, grazing of animals and fuel wood. Gross cropped area, land quality index, per capita agricultural land, per capita standard cattle units and distance of crop lands to CPRs were important factors influencing land quality. Sharing of grass and grazing lands among the villagers would help in raising good quality grasses, protect new plantations and reduce weed infestation. Farming system in the hills is inextricably linked with CPRs. There is a need to frame prudent strategies for their proper management.

I Introduction

Common Property Resources (CPRs) are the integral aspect of mountain landscapes where topographical constraints put limits on arable farming. As such, the CPRs meet the requirements of village communities and contribute to the living conditions of village. In mountainous regions, CPRs are important natural resources and play a key role in the economy as they help to maintain ecological balance, check soil erosion, meet the demand for timber, farm implements and industry, and provide firewood and shelter to the inhabitant and wild life. CPRs are the community's natural resources, where every member has access and usage facility with specified obligations without anybody having exclusive property rights over them (Jodha 1995). In hilly agriculture, CPRs

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