



# Stories from the field



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## In Nepal integrated pest management saves lives and boosts rural incomes

Nepal

The poisonings were widespread. The environmental damage was significant. As agriculture in Nepal became increasingly commercialized, rising production costs and shrinking farm incomes emerged as serious problems. But even more serious were the health and ecological effects that resulted from farmers using commercial chemical pesticides. The government of Nepal understood there were better methods to protect crops, but convincing farmers to change would be a difficult task.

**Nepal turned to Norway for financial support and to FAO for technical assistance** to convince farmers they should adopt integrated pest management (IPM) and reduce pesticide use. FAO designed a project\* that focused on building public awareness

about the health dangers pesticides pose for farmers and their families, as well as the harm they do to the environment.

**Under the project, farmer field school (FFS) participants were shown that wearing protective clothing could not protect them** from being contaminated or poisoned by pesticides. There was simply no escape. Farmers began talking about the health hazards of pesticides and the need for an alternative pest-management system. Follow-up studies showed that after completing the course there was a 35 percent reduction in pesticide applications on vegetables and a 66 percent reduction on rice.

**Tests showed that FFS graduates have higher levels of pest recognition and better knowledge of natural enemies,**

than farmers who did not participate. For example, after the FFS courses, 68 percent of vegetable farmers in Bhaktapur recognized more than four natural pest enemies where before the courses they had not recognized any of the pests.

**Farmers who participated in the project gained the confidence to reduce pesticide applications** after they understood the complexities of the agro-ecosystem. They also developed an appreciation for beneficial fauna and the adverse effect that pesticides have on the overall balance of farm ecology. By improving their observation and analytical skills, farmers found they had better management abilities, which they could apply to many aspects of life. For example, they were more inclined to experiment with eco-friendly alternatives to chemical pesticides, such as botanical mixtures.

**The FFS courses also improved social and leadership skills.** Through weekly meetings, farmers built up their confidence to address assemblies and officials without hesitation. This newfound confidence was even more striking among women farmers who made up about 55 percent of the participants. Women were generally considered less knowledgeable than men and were not usually heard in public. The project helped women gain confidence, improved their status in society and their contributions to family decision-making.

Nepal particularly wanted to include socially disadvantaged groups in the development process. So, the FFS programme brought together not only men and women in common activity, but also different social classes. Farmer associations formed in project districts energized FFS alumni and offered opportunities for them to develop entrepreneurial skills and initiatives such as communally producing organic crops, bio-pesticides and compost, as well as undertaking other endeavours, like animal husbandry.

\* **Project:** *Support to the National Integrated Pest Management Programme in Nepal* (UTF/NEP/055/NEP)

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## LINK

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