



Development Induced Food Insecurity and Poverty in Rural Nepal

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Abstract

Historically, Nepal maintained a high degree of food self-reliance and even exported substantial quantities of grain. Over time, however, and despite constitutional and statutory commitments to the Right to Food, the country has increasingly come to depend on food imports. Drawing on long-term familiarity with rural settings and lived experiences, this paper adopts a perspective to reflect on how development-led modernisation has contributed to rising hunger in rural villages rather than alleviating it. The paper illustrates how modernisation has gradually undermined subsistence-based livelihoods, replacing locally grown and nutritious foods such as barley, wheat, millet and maize with commercially purchased and processed alternatives. It also reflects on the erosion of a former 'solidarity economy', in which rural households exchanged labour and shared food without monetary transactions. As labour relations have become increasingly cash-based and agriculture more commoditised, many farming families now sell their most nutritious produce to the market while consuming less healthy foods themselves. The paper argues that subsistence agriculture should not be dismissed as a sign of backwardness or poverty but recognised as a sustainable and culturally grounded pathway with significant potential to address Nepal's growing food crisis.

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‘While growing up and working closely with agricultural communities in Nepal, I have witnessed how food practices, farming patterns, and everyday diets have changed over time.’ – The Author

Food security in Nepal has increasingly been framed as a matter of rights rather than welfare. This shift was formalised with the enactment of the Right to Food and Food Sovereignty Act on 18 September 2018, following presidential approval.¹ From everyday engagement with food systems, this milestone moves beyond policy, revealing persistent struggles over hunger, land, and control over food. The passage of the Act sought to give effect to Article 36 of the Constitution of Nepal (2015), which adopted ‘the right relating to food’ as one of the basic rights of citizens. On paper, this legal framework is a major step towards the mitigation of hunger, malnutrition, and food insecurity. It is again evident that Nepal’s commitment to food security is reflected in its alignment with the Sustainable Development Goals, specifically Goal 2: to end hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition, and promote sustainable agriculture.² In Nepal, family farming was a common practice.³ Until the 1990s, Nepal was a food-sufficient country. Data on the agriculture sector’s share of total national exports in 1974/1975 show 65 percent, with rice being the major export commodity. On the one hand, an upward trend in reliance on market purchase for household-level food sourcing was found, with more than 67 percent of households purchasing food from the market, while nearly 33 percent of the food source for household consumption came from their own production. On the other hand, it is now a country facing famine.⁴ A closer look at the data shows that in 2008 Nepal ranked lowest in South Asia in terms of food security, as more than 23 percent of Nepalese were suffering from malnutrition (Pyakurel, 2009). In October 2021, 14.1 percent of households had inadequate food consumption and nearly one percent of households had poor dietary diversity, and the proportion of children not meeting the minimum recommended dietary diversity rose to 40.4 percent from 38.5 percent in June 2021.⁵

Given this background, this paper seeks to understand how Nepal moved from a production-oriented society⁶ with grain sufficiency and export capacity to deep import dependency within a few decades. Rather than locating this shift solely within global phenomena such as population growth, climate variability, or global food price volatility, the paper portrays the crisis within the change in people’s everyday life in the name of new development initiatives. It argues that development, as introduced and operationalised in rural Nepal, reshaped food systems, labour relations, and cultural values in ways that undermined subsistence farming and solidarity-based economic practices.

Methodologically speaking, this paper is designed as an opinion essay, presenting facts and anecdotes as an ‘autoethnographic’ reflection, following a more narrative style of writing. The analysis is grounded in long-term observation, lived experience, and locally situated knowledge from rural Nepal, complemented by

¹ <https://www.lawcommission.gov.np/en/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/The-Right-to-Food-and-Food-Sovereignty-Act-2018.pdf>

² https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/migration/np/Development_Advocate_2019.pdf

³ It doesn’t mean that the traditionally operated agriculture practice was only for the subsistence of a family; it enabled people to produce surplus food and grains. However, most farmers preserve it to use this extra food when crops fail or exchange it for other goods. Once there were food surpluses at home, then only they start to work at other tasks unrelated to farming. The very tendency in rural areas was that one, irrespective of the sources of the family earning money, had to eat his/her own produce. That is why, families of any other occupation had to be engaged in farming to produce food for them. Buying grain items for kitchen purposes was referred to as *Besaunu*, and *Besayera khanu* (the act of buying grains for survival) was considered a shame by the society (Magar and Pyakurel 2018).

⁴ FAO 2008, “The State of Food Insecurity in the World 2008”, Rome: Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

⁵ <https://reliefweb.int/report/nepal/impact-covid-19-households-nepal-fifth-round-mvam-household-livelihoods-food-security>

⁶ Villagers could opt to borrow grain from the neighbourhood with a condition to return it after harvesting rather than buying grain items from the market. Those with limited options, especially the family that survives with some issues within the neighbourhood could only do it in compulsion, and they also could do it maintaining some sort of secrecy. I could recall the gossiping in the village and the negative chatting was related to someone’s act of buying regular grain i.e., rice, wheat, maize and millet from the shop for his/her family’s survival. Such backbiting could come to the surface as well; if there is a quarrel between self-sufficient families and market-dependent families, the first could abuse the latter saying ‘how could a *Besayera khane* (food buyer) show such confidence’.



secondary literature and policy documents. By reflecting on, observing, and examining everyday practices such as walking, eating, labour exchange, seed saving, and household budgeting, the paper highlights how development interventions translate into micro-level changes that directly affect food security. Subsistence farming is thus reinterpreted not as an indicator of poverty or backwardness, but as a sustainable and socially embedded mode of life whose erosion has contributed significantly to Nepal's current food crisis.

Interrogating 'Development'

In Nepal, most citizens grew up hearing the word 'development' spoken with certainty and promise. It is often used by government officials, development workers, and policy documents as if its meaning were self-evident and universally beneficial. Roads, markets, modern education, commercial farming, and mobility were presented as signs of progress. Earlier, the author accepted these ideas without hesitation. Development appeared to be a neutral, technical process meant to improve lives. However, my understanding began to shift as I started reflecting on my own village experiences alongside my academic learning. Eventually I argue that Nepal's transition from a largely food self-sufficient society to one increasingly dependent on food imports is not merely a matter of population growth, climate change, or global market volatility. It is also a story of how development interventions have reshaped everyday life, values, and survival strategies in rural areas. What appears as progress at the policy level often translates into new forms of vulnerability at the household level.

In textbooks and training manuals, development is often described as a planned process of economic growth, social transformation, and modernisation. Comparisons between Western societies and those of the Global South are frequently used to justify specific development paths. The former are portrayed as rational, scientific, and forward-looking, while the rest, or the Global South, are depicted as traditional, slow to change, and resistant to progress.

However, it is noticed that almost all societies, including rural Nepal, follow similar development manuals that openly promote growth-oriented strategies rooted in Western values. They emphasise mass education, technical training, and rapid transformation, often suggesting that development could not wait for people to adapt slowly. Statements such as 'development cannot wait for a new generation of educated people' and calls to break away from 'traditional attitudes toward change' reveal an impatience with local knowledge systems and lived practices. Initially I also subscribed to these assumptions without questioning. My participation in spaces such as the World Social Forum and exposure to degrowth and solidarity economy⁷ discussions helped me unlearn many assumptions. Ironically, what global scholars described as 'alternatives' felt deeply familiar to me. Subsistence farming, diversified crops, family labour, and sharing economies were not new concepts but lived realities from my childhood. This realisation forced me to question why practices that sustained rural communities for generations were suddenly framed as backward, while market-driven models that produced dependency were celebrated as modern.

⁷ I myself recall a few of such practices i.e., solidarity to offer free labour if a neighbor is building new house, the tradition is such that on the day of adding new story in the new house constructed by neighbor, others have to express solidarity with free labour to help carrying materials and goods to complete the task. On many auspicious occasions i.e., weeding, Upanayan Sanskar, Pooja, etc. being organized in the neighbourhood, others have to go with available milk items, especially milk and curd so that the organizing house will face less burden on the day. There is also a strong tradition to support the neighbours and relatives in the time of tragedy i.e.; death of someone; people go with some firewood to the funeral procession which is destined to the cemetery or near the river to cremate the body with all religious rituals. People visit the house of deceased with not fruits and neighbours need to go with food items such as ghee, rice, ginger, lemon, etc. to express solidarity to ease overcoming from such difficult situation faced in the neighbourhood. These practices are still available in Nepal, including in my own birth place. Market driven society today might question the possibility and feasibility of such practice. But the answer here is such that all the solidarity components mentioned above have sole control of a farming family without any market influence. In other words, human labor including items i.e.; firewood, ghee, milk, rice all they contribute as solidarity are the product of their own as farmers, that is why it is not difficult for them to help the needy family. On the one hand, it is a help to others during a crisis, and there is every chance to get it reciprocated in a similar situation, on the other.

When I noticed that traditional practices were not engaged as knowledge systems but treated as barriers, I slowly began to see how such thinking has shaped government-led development programmes in Nepal. In fact, development was introduced as something external, to be delivered rather than co-created. Manuals suggested that people in underdeveloped countries viewed governments merely as tax-collecting agencies that take but give little in return, and were suspicious of state programmes. The solution proposed was to work through government structures at all costs, even if this meant bypassing community leadership. In practice, this often-strengthened bureaucracy while weakening local accountability. Reflecting on Nepal's experience, many agriculture-focused government programmes have failed due to corruption, lack of seriousness, or mismatch with farmers' local realities.

Over time, it becomes clear that development is not only about building roads or increasing production. It is also shaped by ideas, histories, and assumptions about what constitutes progress and a 'better life'. Much of the dominant understanding of development is rooted in Western historical experiences, where societies were imagined as moving along a linear path from tradition towards modernity (Nisbet, 1969; Williams, 1985). Within this framework, agrarian societies such as Nepal were often positioned as lagging behind and in need of rapid transformation. In rural contexts, development was commonly translated into efforts to commercialise agriculture, introduce mechanisation, promote monocropping, and integrate farmers into national and global markets.

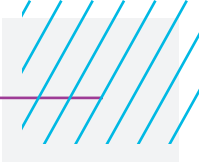
Agricultural extension programmes played a key role in transmitting these ideas to rural areas. Although such programmes often acknowledged local conditions in principle, their underlying logic remained growth-oriented and market-centred. Traditional farming practices, local seed systems, and labour-sharing arrangements were rarely recognised as legitimate forms of knowledge. Instead, they were frequently treated as obstacles to progress, to be replaced by modern technologies and external inputs. As Rudolph and Rudolph (1967) observe, this framing overlooks the adaptive and dynamic qualities that exist within tradition itself.

In Nepal, where rural life has long been shaped by ecological constraints, fragile landscapes, and strong social relations, the uncritical application of these development models produced outcomes that were often unintended. Rather than strengthening food systems, many interventions disrupted the social and cultural foundations that had sustained subsistence farming for generations. Development, in this sense, functioned not only as an economic intervention but also as a gradual reordering of values, aspirations, and everyday practices.

As I became more involved in academic discussions and field observations since 2000, the gap between development policy and lived reality became impossible to ignore. Fertiliser shortages, misuse of agricultural subsidies, and poorly designed programmes such as rooftop farming or smart agriculture initiatives are frequently reported in an agrarian country-Nepal. While these programmes are introduced with strong rhetoric, they often fail not only due to non-contextual existence but also program's failure to reach the farmers who need them most. In many cases, beneficiaries have been those with political connections or access to bureaucratic systems. Genuine farmers struggle with substandard seeds, inappropriate land selection, and lack of long-term support. These failures are not accidental; they reflect a development approach that prioritises visibility and numbers over context and sustainability.

An Illusion of Roads as a Major Indicator of Development

One of the most visible markers of development in rural Nepal is road construction. Roads are celebrated as symbols of connectivity and opportunity. In many ways, they have improved access to services and information. Yet their impact on everyday life is more complex than commonly acknowledged. In rural Nepal, roads have undoubtedly improved physical connectivity, access to markets, and availability of services such as education and healthcare. However, the impacts of infrastructure development extend far beyond mobility,



reshaping everyday life in complex and often contradictory ways (Pyakurel, 2009) if the focus is only on road construction, ignoring other socio-cultural realities of the locality.

Prior to road access, mobility in many villages depended primarily on walking. Travel to nearby market centres or district headquarters required physical effort and time but involved minimal cash expenditure. Importantly, walking allowed individuals to complete necessary tasks while still allocating time for agricultural work on the same day. Mobility was thus integrated into subsistence-oriented livelihoods. With the arrival of roads and public transport, mobility became monetised. Travel now requires cash for fares, involves waiting time aligned with transport schedules, and often necessitates additional spending on tea, snacks, and market-purchased food. For villages with limited surplus production, these costs represent a significant economic burden. Moreover, time once devoted to farming is increasingly absorbed by travel-related activities.

The reorganisation of everyday life brought about by infrastructure development becomes most visible when examined through village-level experiences. One such example can be drawn from the author's own village, located approximately 75 kilometres from Kathmandu and around seven kilometres from the district headquarters of Bidur, Nuwakot. Until the early 1990s, the village had no access to public transport. Movement to the district centre depended entirely on walking, whether for administrative work, health-related visits, or marketing purposes. The walk to the district headquarters took roughly one and a half hours. People typically left home around 8:30 in the morning, reached Bidur by about 10:00, completed their work, and returned home within five to six hours, depending on the nature of their tasks. This mode of mobility required physical effort but almost no monetary expense. There was no need to spend money on transport, tea, snacks, or meals along the way. Importantly, because the journey could be completed within half a day, people often returned home with enough time to engage in agricultural work or other household activities. Mobility, labour, and subsistence were closely connected and mutually reinforcing.

The introduction of roads and public transport fundamentally altered this rhythm of everyday life. At present, only two buses operate between the village and the district headquarters: one in the morning at around 10:00 and another in the evening at around 5:00. Most villagers now prefer to use these buses rather than walk. While this shift is often celebrated as a sign of development, it has introduced new constraints. A trip to Bidur now occupies nearly the entire day, from morning until evening. In addition to paying transport fares, villagers spend money on tea, snacks, and sometimes meals while waiting for the return bus. Many also purchase vegetables or other food items from the market, adding further expense.

As a result, a journey that once required time and effort but no cash has been transformed into one that demands both time and money. The loss is not only economic but also temporal. Hours that were previously available for farming or household work are now absorbed by waiting, transit and travel. For households that rely heavily on subsistence agriculture, this change has direct implications for food production and consumption, facilitating market products (including vegetables) for the daily survival of villagers. These changes raise an important question: who truly benefits from infrastructure development? Roads and transport undoubtedly serve the market, or those who have goods to sell. However, for villages with little marketable surplus, infrastructure can become a burden rather than an advantage. In other words, increased mobility creates new forms of dependency on the market and cash economy without expanding corresponding income opportunities. This pattern is not unique to one village but has become increasingly common across rural Nepal.

The situation is even more challenging in remote areas, where transport costs are significantly higher. In some cases, people pay more than 30 rupees per kilometre for bus travel. Despite the high cost relative to distance and service quality, people continue to use motorised transport. This preference is shaped not only by convenience but also by changing social value systems. Walking, once an ordinary and respected practice, is now often associated with being miserly, backward, or uncivilised in rural areas. Motorised travel, by contrast,

has become a marker of modernity and social status. This cultural shift reflects a broader market-driven understanding of development, where consumption is equated with progress. In such contexts, infrastructure development does not simply improve mobility; it reshapes values, expectations, and everyday choices. The combined effect of increased expenses, loss of productive time, and changing social attitudes contributes indirectly to food insecurity by weakening subsistence livelihoods and deepening dependence on markets.

Changing Food Habits and Nutritional Decline

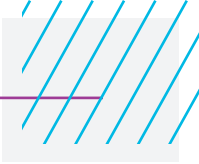
Another visible consequence of development-induced change in rural Nepal is the transformation of food habits (Pyakurel, 2009). Historically, diets were shaped by local ecology, agricultural cycles, and cultural preferences. *Dhindo*, *roti*, *khole*, *chyakhla*, and seasonal vegetables formed the dietary foundation in hill regions, while rice was often reserved for specific occasions or households with access to irrigated land. Over time, development discourse and state policies increasingly framed these traditional foods as inferior or insufficient, branding rice consumption with progress and social mobility, reinforced by government subsidies and market availability. Alongside rice, processed foods such as instant noodles, packaged snacks, sugary beverages, tea, and coffee entered as major rural diets.

This dietary transition has had multiple consequences. Nutritionally dense and diverse local foods have been replaced by calorie-rich but nutrient-poor alternatives. Household expenditure on food has increased, while dietary quality has declined, particularly among poorer households. Hunger in many rural contexts no longer signifies the absence of food per se, but the absence of socially valued foods, especially rice. The shift in food habits has also contributed to environmental and economic inefficiencies. Longer food supply chains increase waste, transportation costs, and dependence on external markets. At the household level, spending on non-essential consumables such as sugar, cigarettes, and carbonated drinks further reduces resources available for nutritious food. These changes collectively exacerbate malnutrition and food insecurity.

People used to drink milk in the morning, which has been replaced by tea and coffee. *Mahi* (buttermilk) has been replaced by Coca Cola, Pepsi, and other kinds of cheap but local carbonated drinks. Tea, coffee, cigarettes, carbonated drinks including Coca Cola and ice cream – all are products that have recently entered the village along with <development>. Earlier people used to be dependent on *sakhkhar* (a raw sugarcane product) for making every sweet dish at home. *Sakhkhar* used to be cheaper as well as more hygienic than sugar. Today people buy at least 10–20 kg of sugar per month, especially for tea and coffee. Homemade tobacco called *tamakhu* would be used for smoking, but today it has been replaced by costly cigarettes. For all these new but unhealthy food items, one has to spend a lot of money in comparison to traditional healthy, hygienic, and cheap food items and other materials.

I recall a time when in many villages, it was once common to announce the availability of *mahi* (buttermilk) so that anyone in need could collect it freely. Selling milk products, except ghee, was considered unusual, and dairy circulation largely operated through informal sharing rather than market exchange. Although marginalised households, i.e., Dalits (Pyakurel, 2007; Pyakurel, 2011; Pyakurel, 2015; Khanal et al., 2013; Pyakurel, 2021), and ethnic communities often lacked direct access to milk, curd, or ghee due to the cost and labour involved in rearing cattle, they could still access *mahi* through these community-based practices.

With increasing integration into market economies, such practices have steadily declined. Milk and dairy products are now routinely sold, either directly to markets or through collection centres, and even *mahi* has become a commodified item. What was once freely available is now purchased at prices expensive relative to milk itself. This shift has reduced access to nutritious by-products for poorer households while reinforcing cash dependence for everyday food needs. These changes in food habits have pushed the farming system into a deep crisis, introducing a strong narrative against subsistence farming. In other words, subsistence farming, which formed the backbone of rural livelihoods, has gradually come to be viewed as economically unviable



and socially undesirable.

Agriculture in Nepal's hills and mountains has always required collective effort due to geographical constraints. Subsistence farming depended on family labour, shared knowledge, and seasonal rhythms. Younger generations increasingly distance themselves from agriculture, associating it with physical hardship, low social status, low cash flows, and uncertainty about the future of modern life. This shift reflects not only economic pressures but also changing aspirations and social values. As agriculture loses its place in everyday imagination, fewer people are willing to invest time, labour, or care in sustaining the occupation.

Earlier systems of labour exchange and payment in kind (largely grain products of the farm as wages) ensured a direct link between work and food. Wages, being in kind, could be accessible to all members of households even if earned by a single family member. With the gradual shift towards cash-based wages, this connection has weakened, and earnings in cash were misused by male members of the family in most cases. As cash is easy to carry and offers the flexibility to buy every commodity in the market, household incomes are absorbed by rising daily expenses or spent on non-essential consumption, with some uneven effects within households. Women (Pyakurel, 2016), children, and older people are often the first to feel the consequences when shared access to food is replaced by control over cash. Together with youth migration and declining investment in subsistence farming, these shifts have slowly weakened the ecosystem of local food systems and increased dependence on external markets. I could say that what is often presented as progress in economic terms thus carries hidden costs for food security and social well-being in rural areas with some unique arrangements.

Systems of labour exchange such as *parma*, *aalo-palo*, and *arma-parma* continued to shape collective work during planting, weeding, and harvesting. Through these arrangements, labour was shared rather than sold, and effort was returned over time rather than immediately measured in cash. Such practices created a quiet sense of security and unity, ensuring that no household was left to manage heavy agricultural work alone. However, changing labour relations in society have also had an impact on low attraction to farming in important ways. To continue with subsistence livelihood patterns, communities relied on forms of cooperation grounded in mutual care and reciprocity. For many households, farming was not primarily about earning profit, but about sustaining life, relationships, and a sense of continuity with parental tradition. These practices allowed families to remain connected to land, seasons, and community members with a sense of belonging.

Seed saving and exchange practices follow a similar logic. By preserving and sharing seeds within communities (Magar and Pyakurel, 2018), households generally reduce their dependence on external inputs and maintain a degree of control over their cost of production. Across Nepal, different communities have developed their own names and customs for mutual support, reflecting diverse ways of responding to ecological and social uncertainty. But now, these practices often remain unnoticed or are dismissed as remnants of the past. Those practices were in place not because communities resisted change, but because they offered practical ways of living with uncertainty, scarcity, and limited institutional support. In many respects, they represented forms of resilience that had quietly sustained food security and social bonds for generations. But this very system was destroyed by allowing a profit-oriented market to deliver seeds to farmers, undermining farmers' rights through strict provisions on variety development, quality control, certification, and sale of seeds. The West, which is discussing similar seed sovereignty approaches globally as alternatives that place care, cooperation, and well-being at the centre of economic life (Satgar, 2014; Mariosa et al., 2022), was the one that suggested governments of the Global South go for hybrid seeds, destroying local seed ecosystems. Importantly, the Nepal Biodiversity Strategy also identifies 'commercialisation of agriculture' as a major reason for the loss of agricultural biodiversity in the country (MOFSC, 2002, p. 77).

State policies play an important role in shaping how food is produced, accessed, and valued. In Nepal, agricultural policies have largely moved in the direction of commercialisation, mechanisation, and market integration. While these approaches are often introduced in the name of efficiency and growth, their benefits

are uneven. Subsidies, credit schemes, and development programmes tend to favour farmers who are already better positioned or have access to political and bureaucratic networks, while smallholders often receive support that is limited, irregular, or difficult to access. In this process, the strengths of subsistence-oriented farming systems are frequently overlooked. Rather than reinforcing local food production, many policies encourage greater reliance on external inputs and markets. For households with limited cash and insecure incomes, this dependence can increase vulnerability rather than reduce it. It is therefore not surprising that many agricultural programmes struggle to deliver lasting improvements in food security.

A more supportive policy environment would begin by recognising the value of locally grounded food systems. This would mean strengthening, rather than replacing, practices that already sustain rural livelihoods. Protecting traditional seed systems, supporting mixed and diversified farming, ensuring fair access to resources, and acknowledging non-market contributions to food security are all part of such an approach (De Schutter, 2022). Viewed in this way, supporting solidarity-based practices is not a return to the past, but a way of investing in resilience, sustainability, and long-term well-being.

Conclusion

Contemporary food insecurity in the Global South cannot be understood simply as a problem of insufficient production or inadequate knowledge of human survival. As this paper has shown, the crisis is deeply rooted in the everyday shift in perception and practices in the name of transformations. In other words, it is a crisis brought about by development practices that reshaped rural life, livelihoods, and social relations, including the ecosystem of food production and consumption. It can be argued that changes in mobility, agricultural production, and food consumption patterns have gradually weakened subsistence-based livelihoods that once ensured household food security and social cohesion.

Development interventions, particularly those emphasising market integration, infrastructure expansion, and commercialisation, altered how people allocate time, labour, and resources. While these interventions improved physical access to markets and services, they also increased dependence on cash-based economies without generating corresponding income opportunities for many rural households. Subsistence agriculture, once integrated into daily life and supported by reciprocal labour and food-sharing practices, has increasingly been rendered unviable. The decline in youth participation in farming further accelerates this process, reinforcing cycles of agricultural abandonment and livelihood insecurity. The change in food habits reflects this broader shift. As locally produced foods and informal sharing systems eroded, market-purchased items replaced diets that were once nutritionally diverse and socially embedded. Food, which previously circulated through relations of care and obligation, has become increasingly commodified, making access contingent on purchasing power rather than social belonging. These changes have not only affected nutritional outcomes but have also reshaped the moral economy of food in rural Nepal.

This paper argues that subsistence farming should not be viewed as a remnant of underdevelopment or a barrier to progress. Instead, it represents a historically adaptive, ecologically grounded, and socially embedded system that sustained rural livelihoods under difficult geographical conditions. Its erosion reflects not an inevitable modernisation process, but the unintended consequences of development approaches that undervalued local knowledge, solidarity-based economic practices, and non-market forms of well-being.

Reimagining food security in countries like Nepal therefore requires moving beyond narrow productivity-based or market-driven frameworks. It calls for development approaches that recognise the value of locally grounded production and consumption systems, strengthen solidarity-based practices, and support gradual, context-sensitive transformations rather than abrupt transitions. Policies aimed at food sovereignty must engage with everyday realities, restoring dignity to rural livelihoods and acknowledging that well-being is shaped as much by social relations and cultural practices as by economic growth. Only by re-centring development



around these principles can Nepal move towards a more equitable and sustainable future, including on the issue of food security.

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