Rainfed *rabi* cropping in rice fallows of Nepal – Summary of impacts

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SUMMARY OF IMPACTS

Large areas of rice fallows (land left fallow after the harvest of rainfed rice) were identified in Nepal during a previous project[1] and preliminary work began in 2001 to test, develop and promote the use of additional crops after rice[2]. A baseline survey of a sample of households during the 2001/2002 *rabi* season showed that more than 60% of the land used to grow rice was left fallow (Table 1). By the 2003/2004 season, after only two full years of project work, only 20% of the rice land was being left uncropped after the rice harvest. This large increase in cropping intensity is testament to the exceptional skills of the implementing organisation, FORWARD, in social mobilisation and organisation.

Table 1. **Reduction in land left fallow after rice in households working with the project.**

District	Number of Households	Total land (ha)	Rice fallow land		
			2001/2	2003/4	Change (%)
Jhapa	182	248	173	62	- 64
Morang	63	105	62	8	- 87
Saptari	124	183	102	39	- 62
Siraha[a]	20	26	11	7	- 36
Total	389	562	348	116	- 67

[a]project involvement only since 2002/3 season.

A cautionary note must be sounded, however. Observations of these additional crops during the 2003/2004 season clearly showed that soil fertility is low in these areas and that a second crop may not be profitable (and hence sustainable) in many cases unless more attention is paid to increasing soil fertility. Since organic materials, including animal manure, in these villages are generally burnt as fuel for cooking, warmth etc., this must entail increased use of interventions such as trees and composting. Some progress has been made with limited adoption of the integration of pigeonpea on bunds, but a great deal of additional work is necessary.

Pigeonpea growing on field bunds alongside chickpea.

[1] R7541 Legumes in rice fallows
[2] R8098/R8221 Rainfed rabi cropping: pilot phase.