

Statement of Research Goals and Justification for the Candidacy

As we transverse through the realms of imagination and connect with the world of reality, we build personal paradigm that shape our future and stand the test of time. It, one such paradigm, was the reason and conviction behind my decision to persuade for Environmental Studies with a focus on **Agriculture Productivity and Sustainable Land Management Models for Small Farmlands**, as my graduate major.

Nepal, my motherland, is a developing agrarian country where agriculture contributes 35 percent of the national Gross Domestic Product [GDP]. Approximately 80 percent of 30 million people in Nepal reside in rural areas, and 66 percent are small land holding farmers following traditional agriculture systems. 78 percent of these small holder farms are subsistence only, whereas the proportion of holdings that produce for sale is not even 1 percent. An estimated 60 percentage of household cannot meet their own food needs with agricultural production only meeting food requirements for three to eight months per year. Nepalese agricultural production has become virtually stagnant with only a 2.7 to 2.8 percent increase in average annual growth rates for past two decades.

In light of the fact that the majority of the Nepalese population is involved in agriculture as their sole occupation (especially in rural areas), it is very important to analyze agricultural production/growth alongside social and economic contexts. Agriculture is a key sector for economic growth, poverty alleviation, raising living standards and overall human development. Yet, land fragmentation, unproductive and unsustainable use of land has hindered agricultural production as well as technology innovation. The average land holding is 0.8 hectare (ha), almost half of the total farms holding less than 0.5 ha of land, while those with less than 1 ha of land constitute nearly three-fourths of all holdings. Average land holding size of Nepalese farmers is getting smaller with time; average land holding size has declined by 28 percent between 1961 and 2001 whereas 16 percent don't hold any land at all. Along with the negative impact in agriculture production, the interest of youth is beginning to wane.

Since a large proportion of Nepalese farmers are small land-holders, commercialization of Nepalese agriculture is only possible through management of small farmland and technology development appropriate for small scales. Some practices in the commercialization of agriculture via the private public partnerships have been seen earlier viz. One Village One Product (OVOP) program involving the Government of Nepal, Federation of Nepalese Chambers of Commerce and Industries [FNCCI], District Development Committee/ Village Development Committee [DDC/VDC], "Commercial Agriculture Alliance" as non-profit company formed to assist "Commercial Agriculture Development Project" of Asian Development Bank/Government of Nepal (ADB/GoN) involving FNCCI, Agro-enterprise, DDC, cooperatives, Market Management Committees etc. Yet, these practices are not effective as expected for the commercialization of agriculture because of land fragmentation, subsistence farming, dearth of planning and implementation as well as superficial analysis of similar program in other countries such as Japan, Thailand etc.

Practice such as contract farming in Africa, Asia, Central and Latin America has enabled small scale farmers in developing their farming operation through the creation of market linkages both domestically and internationally. But in Nepal, much research is needed before developing technologies,

land management policies, production models etc., for the sustainable management and increased productivity of small farmlands and small farmers.

This is the reason behind my interest and ambition to pursue an MS in Environmental Studies focusing in **Agriculture Productivity and Sustainable Land Management Models for Small Farmlands** in your esteemed university.

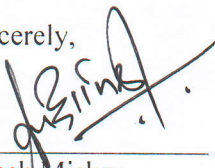
Working as an Agriculture Technical Assistant [ATA] for the United States Agencies for International Development [USAID] funded *Suaahara* (Good Nutrition) project in Rasuwa, Nepal has provided me a great experience in this field of study. This project aimed at improving access to and consumption of nutritious foods in areas with very poor nutrition indicators. *Suaahara* program ultimately aimed at developing Local Resource Persons [LRP] to attain food and nutrient security by involving thousand days' women (women with child under two years' age) in various agricultural production activities using comprehensive and household-based approach. Beneficiaries, who implement scientifically sound agricultural practices after training will be selected as Village Model Farmers [VMF] and developed as local agriculture service providers according to their interest at the end of the project.

Based on my interests I have come to know of Kentucky State University, College of Agriculture, Food Science and Sustainable Systems, and Assistant Prof. Buddhi Gyawali who is conducting research in Developing Agriculture Productivity and Sustainable Land Management Models for Small Farmlands which I believe to best suit with my field of interest.

I believe your prestigious university, with its advanced research tools and technologies, advanced infrastructures and facilities, will be the best platform for me to further my education. It would be my great pleasure to conduct research under your assistant-ship offering my experiences and work humbly and diligently to contribute to the reputation of the College of Agriculture, Food Science and Sustainable Systems, as a leader in the study of Master in Environmental Studies. I assure you that I will do my best and to be a credit to your institution and you will not regret having given me this opportunity. I am a relentlessly hard worker, a rigorous researcher, and a loyal steward of any education I receive. If I am admitted to your university, I will be vigilant of its expectations, respecting rules and regulations, norms and values, and can assure you that you will not regret having given me this opportunity.

Finally, I would like to thank the Graduation Review Committee for going through my statement of research goals and justification for the candidacy thoroughly to understand my interest and eagerness to further my study in your university.

Sincerely,



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