

Climate Change

Kangpara is a case in point

Gradual decline in chili and bamboo produce stands as evidence

TASHI DEMA

Kangpara chili and bambooware that lie displayed along the narrow platforms in front of shops in Wamrong are the main sources of income for its villagers.

REPORT

The fear among Kangpara villagers in Trashigang today is of the shrinking produce along that same narrow platforms, which subsequently leads to shrinking income.

Within the last couple of years, Kangpara villagers said they experienced diminishing bamboo products and their chili perishing from blight.

The situation, Kangpara farmer said, was worsening every year that the fear among them looms of a time when they are unable to weave bamboo produce for their own use and chili for self-consumption.

Farmer Pema Rinzin, 60, said chili production in the locality was reducing annually, and it worsened this year, as it rained continuously during the chili transplantation season.

"We suspected pest infestation, but there was no pests in the chili tree that died," he said.

Kangpara gup Chempa Dorji said people, who sold quintals of chili a few years ago, could not produce for their own consumption today.

He said chili production began decreasing since four years or so ago.

Bamboo products are also declining in the locality, and people said it was because of resource depletion that people were gradually giving up producing weaves from bamboo.

Chempa Dorji said a few people in the locality were bringing bamboo from Samdrupjongkhar to weave the products.

Farmers also said that maize, their staple diet, was affected in the recent years.

While maize in the area were severely affected by diseases like gray leaf spot and Turcicum leaf blight, farmers say drought and

extensive rainfall reduced the yield dramatically over the years.

A farmer from Khayshing said extensive sunshine during spring, when the maize saplings were about a metre high, dried the crop, while extensive rainfall during June and July soaked the crop.

"We couldn't harvest any yield this year, forget storing," Sonam, 45, said.

Drought, windstorm, untimely and disproportionate rainfall and extreme cold, said a finding of an assessment of climate change vulnerabilities in the gewog, resulted in the decline of agricultural products in Kangpara gewog.

Conducted on a joint support program by Royal Society for Protection of Nature (RSPN) and UN Development Program this year, the assessment was conducted to quantify how communities would adapt to changing environmental conditions.

RSPN officials said Kangpara was vulnerable to climate change, as water sources in the area were degraded.

"Bamboo has become extinct, and the area is very vulnerable to earthquake," the report stated.

The assessment report stated that, although information on climate vulnerability assessment was scanty, the country's fragile ecosystem was vulnerable to climate change and global warming, because it was wedged between two large, industrialised nations.

"Incidents of floods, droughts, loss of biodiversity, health hazards and poverty due to climate change and global warming effects are the biggest concern of the Bhutanese people," the report stated.

The assessment conducted in 383 households of 17 villages under Kangpara gewog, it was found that there were problems of irrigation, seed storage and farm labour shortage in the gewog.

Farmer Pema Rinzin said, since agriculture products were



During the haydays: When bamboos were aplenty and men took to weaving

being affected, people were seeking alternative employment and leaving the village.

He said young people were seeking employment in construction sector.

Since most villagers are subsistence farmers, and agriculture is based on dry land cultivation, combined with livestock and small kitchen garden, the report stated that villagers depended on forest resources, especially cane and bamboo, which were also used for housing purposes.

RSPN officials said it was important to prepare the community, comprising mostly illiterates, of the impacts of climate change.

The assessment, RSPN officials said, was targeted to produce a consolidated report containing local socio-economic variability and trends, inventory of available indigenous coping mechanisms and strategies, including a climate change adaptation plan.

"The action plan is to reduce exposure and sensitivity of households in Kangpara, and to increase their adaptive capacity," the report stated. "That way, vulnerabilities to impacts of climate change are reduced."

RSPN officials said activities, like adoption of community

forests, formation of non-timber management group and establishing poultry farms, were ways to address the issue.

Kangpara gewog agriculture extension officer Pema Wangchen said various interventions were implemented in the locality.

"We conducted farmer's training programs on how to make beds, plant crop on rotational basis and using locally available raw materials," he said,

adding that they also brought seeds from different areas, the yields from which had not improved.

Officials from territorial range office said they do not mark trees in water catchment area to protect water sources.

Meanwhile, some Kangpara farmers said they feared watching the situation worsen.

"We might have to leave our villages, as there'll be nothing for us to eat," a farmer said.

TENDER

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