

## Pointed Gourd and Watermelon Production in the Ramechchap Midhills

One of the districts in the Janakpur zone in the east of Nepal, Ramechchap is observed to be remote and underdeveloped, but rich in natural resources. The district is 469 to 6958 meters above the sea level. Manthali the headquarter of Ramechchap is close to the river tamakoshi in the lowland hence arid climate reigns in the area. Though people belonging to all casts and religions reside in the headquarters, the Majhi population is particularly high in the nearby VDCs. Dry area, dense population, traditional agriculture systems and imports from the Terai and Kathmandu mean that vegetable scarcity is common in this region. Considering these multiple factors, The Vegetable Seed Production Programme was initiated here in 2067 B.S. under the financial aid of Swiss Development Corporation and technical assistance of CEAPRED.

While exploring vegetables suited for production in Manthali, watermelon and pointed gourd were finalized as crops with high yield within a short time frame that could be produced in a dry area. For farming purposes, the areas around the Tamakoshi river were divided into four pocket areas; Manthali, Khimti, Bhaluwajor and Bhatauli. In 2067/05/03, through the initiatives of CEAPRED District Coordinator Mr. Narayan Prasad Ghimire, Agri-technician Mr. Lal babu Sah and an innovative farmer Mr. Narayan Prasad Acharya began farming pointed gourd.



At the initial phase, pointed gourd farming only took place in 1.5 ropanis of land and the saplings were purchased from nursery owning farmers from Mahottari. In recent times, the scenario is encouraging and the pointed gourd is prioritized like other vegetables and farming is expanded to 5 ropanies, One of the local farmers, Mr. Narayan Prasad Prasai, started pointed gourd farming on 8 annas of land and within 6 months he was able to earn Rs.22,000 from the sale of 400 kgs at the price of Rs.55 per kilo. Encouraged from the benefits, he continued and expanded farming to 1 ropani and earned Rs. 34,5000. According to Mr. Prasai the money has allowed him to meet household expenses and educate his children.

There was a problem of markets during the first year as the pointed gourd was a new vegetable to the market and consumers in Manthali. It was initially, therefore, taken to the market in Charikot of Dolakha, but the situation has been very different in the second year as local consumers increased and pointed gourd farming is flourishing and is practiced by the farmers of the area.

While the king of vegetables is the pointed gourd, the watermelon is the new leader of summer fruit. Watermelon farming was also initiated in the same area, in the Kunori Tol of Bhaluwajor. In 1 ropani of land, farmer Kulman Majhi earned Rs. 20,000 from the sale of 500 kgs at the price of Rs. 40 per kilo. To

date, he has been able to accumulate Rs.30, 000 from the sale of watermelons and Rs 15,000 from the sale of pointed gourd. The money he has earned has helped run the house, especially during festival celebrations. He is happy at being able to taste and introduce new fruits and vegetables in Rammechhap. He says that he, along with other farmers of the Kunori Tole are very grateful to CEAPRED for its technical and financial assistance and for encouraging new vegetable production in the area.

Pointed gourd farming has been extended to 3.5 ropanies of land and the case of watermelon is similar. The production of both crops continues to expand in this district