

# Sustainable Agricultural Rural Development in Twelve Tibetan Settlements

COSPE1

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## Abstract

*The overall project's aim is to contribute to the development process in the 12 major rural Tibetan settlements in India, to alleviate poverty and to improve the environmental situation. The specific objectives are to promote organic agriculture practices, thus minimizing the negative impact of modern conventional agriculture and helping farmers to make better use of the available resources (water, soil, equipment etc.).*

*The direct beneficiaries of the project are 2000 Tibetan farmers, 1524 Tibetan agriculture extension working, and functionaries of the cooperative societies. Indirect beneficiaries include the entire rural community (approximately 60,000 people) living within the 12 settlements, equal to 45% of the total Tibetan refugees in India.*

*The agricultural situation in the Tibetan settlements is greatly diversified. In the Karnataka areas, farmers are trying to apply modern conventional farming techniques. However, poor agronomic practices, such as commercial monocultures of corn or cotton using high levels of chemical fertilizers, compounded with insufficient crop rotation and lack of organic fertilization, result in soils losing their natural fertility. The soils have become dry and mineralized, unable to retain moisture and to withstand the effects of erratic rainfall in areas that are mostly rain fed. The overuse of nitrogen fertilizers has resulted in high nitrate pollution of the water tables. On the other hand, in two settlements of Arunachal Pradesh, subsistence agriculture predominates, with little or no application of chemical inputs. It is organic by default but, farmers apply substandard techniques that result in generally poor yields.*

*The main activities of the project include: demonstration of organic and biodynamic farming techniques; production (through selected farmer's trials support, cooperative farms' trials, and extension service to all farmers); production (delivery of inputs to farmers willing to convert their land to organic); data collection (through monitoring trials' results); training (to selected farmers, cooperative secretaries, and extension workers); support to marketing (including participation to India Organic 2007 and 2008 – national trade fairs); and organic certification*

*The main results include: an increase in the crop diversity; increase of organic production; 500 certified acres (IMO); farmers and extension workers are aware of organic farming techniques; and publication of training manuals in the Tibetan language.*

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