

[Skriv tekst]

The organic farming project in Kavre District

A short analyze of the organic farming project in Kavre District and the experiences so far, based on village visits and discussions with the ASK/Triangle team.

The challenges met in the Kavre project will be used in the analyze of the LFA for the Syangja project application and where special efforts might be needed and knowledge shared.

1. Introduction

Thank you very much to everyone from the Triangle office in Nagarkot for welcoming me to take part in the Organic Farming project under the Trianglen.nu and ASK Nepal. We have had several discussions and talks. Also, thanks to Sunita and Tara for inviting me to a beautiful festival in their family.



During my stay in Nagarkot, from the 1.1.19- 27.1.19, I visited 6 villages - including a potential new village, which might join the organic farming project. I carried out interviews with the farmers in the villages, including the lead farmers, to hear about their benefits from participating in the Triangle project and where improvements are needed. The questions were also asked in order to analyze to which extend the LFA indicators and baseline indicators are registered regularly registered by the farmers and the Triangle - and how the indicators are used in the status reports for the development of the organic farming. If needed the indicators might be adjusted for the Syangja project.

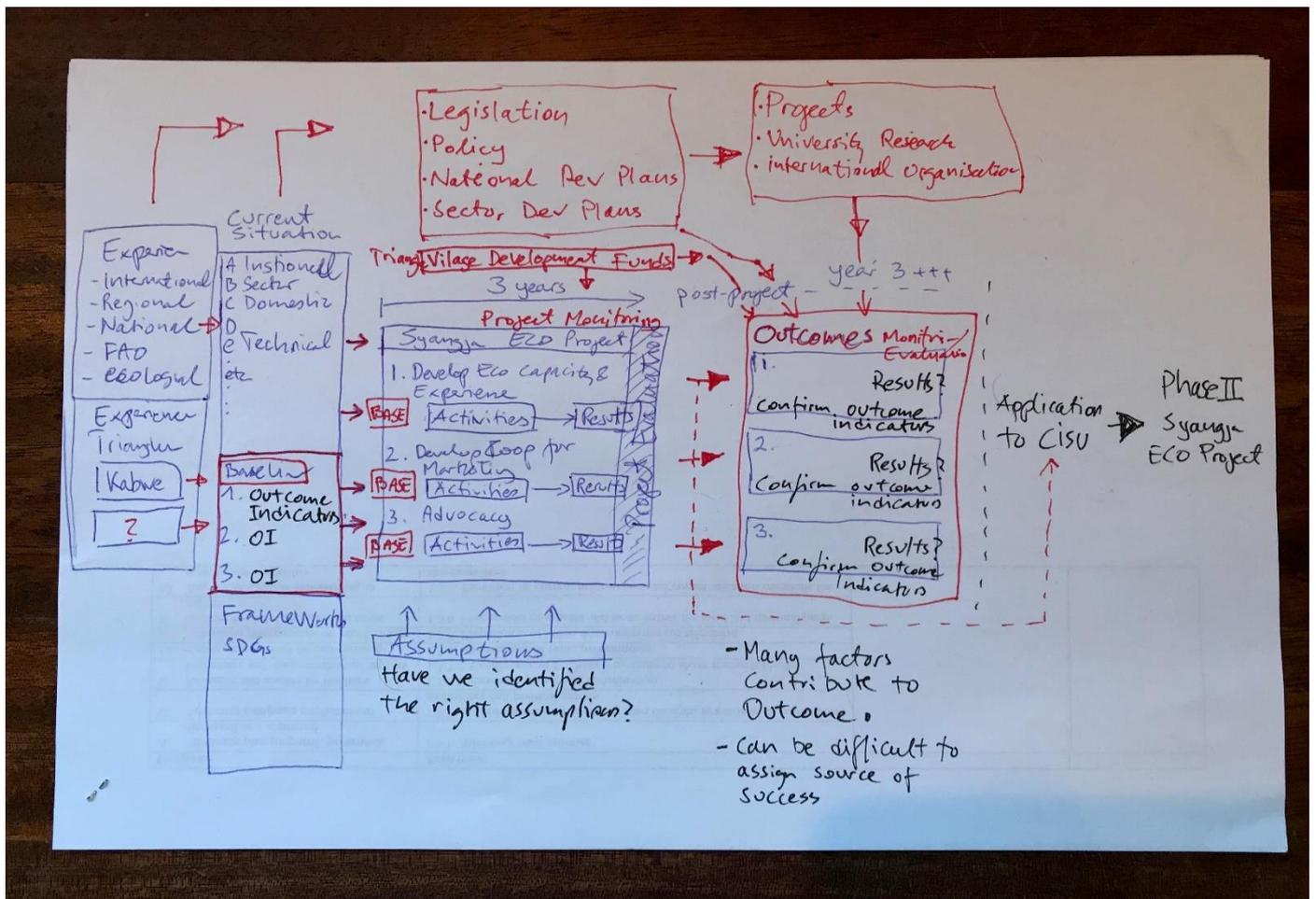
Before leaving Denmark, I had a meeting with the Triangle members, Henrik Brade (HB), Peter Marinus Jensen, Peter Qvist-Hoffman and Christian Kruse, and various input options were discussed. With this starting point, and specifik input from Peter Marinus Jensen and Peter Qvist-Hoffman, I have formulated the following input to the project.

Overall goal: Review the 17 outcome indicators in the LFA (Logical Framework, Annex 3) matrix and revise if necessary (add or remove). Bear in mind that the indicators must be important, relevant and workable using limited resources (labor, expenditure, time). The main focus will be on objective 1 and 2 of the LFA.

Activities:

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1. Review of the LFA indicators to specify the method of verification etc. where necessary (e.g. relative or absolute measurement).
 - a) Specify how the measurement can be undertaken (means of verification).
2. Review the proposed baseline indicators of the Syangja project, based on a quick study in Kavre District
 1. Compile a questionnaire for Kavre District together with Hari and Bradi. Translate it to Nepalese
 2. Complete 4-6 village visits in Kavre district
 3. Discuss the questionnaire with the farmers in 4-6 villages on site visits
 4. Ask about the farmers benefits from the project and needs for improvements
 5. Pick out suggestions for indicator improvements relevant for the Syangja project
3. Site visits and discussions of LFA and baseline indicators in Syangja
4. Review the report "Households surveys to prepare the report about status of villages in organic/Ecological farming practice" for Syangja incl. the baseline excel schedule. The baseline indicators shall be reproducible, specific and useful - also for the farmers
5. Identify possible university projects



Peter Qwist-Hoffman: "Rough sketch"- just like the books tell

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2. Kavre District

The following section provides an overview of the results of the site visits i Kavre District with the aim of being introduced to the project approach and preliminary results and assess the relevance and usefulness of the baseline indicators (Activities 2.1-2.6 of the scope of work above.

2.1 Compile a questionnaire for Kavre District together with Hari and Bradi. Translate it to Nepalese

On The second day in Nagarkot we designed a draft questionnaire for the site visits (Anne Marie and Badri, Hari, Sunita and Tara commented it). The questionnaire should, among other things, be used to investigate whether the indicators in Kavre are used and found useful in practice and whether adjustments are needed for Syangja. Hari offered to make the translation into Nepalese. The questionnaire (Annex A) was used in the village visits from the 17.1.19-23-1.19. Tara was interpreter and Anne Marie took notes.

2.2 Complete 4-6 village visits in Kavre district (Activity 2.2) and discussion of the questionnaire with the farmers in 4-6 villages on site visits (Activity 2.3)

In Kavre district we, Sunita, Tara and Anne Marie, visited: Village 59,55,56,53,51 and a new village, which will possibly participate in the extension of the project. About 20 farmers attended the meetings in each village - except one, where only about 10 participated. They answered most questions and they also had a lot of internal discussions at the meetings. Se Annex C for reports from each site visit..

The organic farming has been added to the original concept for 2-3 years in 9 villages in Kavre, involving 225 farmers out of an estimated 1500 (HB). The farmers started with organic farming in 2015 and 2016.

Almost all villages have invested microcredits in goat-raising. I got the impression (as HB) that goats seem to be so attractive because they are quite easy to keep and bring in an considerable price when grown (sold?) - 12-15000 NRP or DKK 700-900, the equivalent of more than a month's salary for an unskilled labourer. (*is it income per adult goat or it total including milk and cheese?*) They keep the goats in stables and avoid overgrazing. They use the goat manure, among the others manures from cows, buffaloes, chicken, as fertilizers in the organic vegetable fields. The goats are a good first step towards transforming some of the farmers land to organic vegetable production.

The questions and the discussions in the village meetings indicated that the results are positive so far, and that the interest in the project is strong. Many of the farmers want to expand their organic areas.

Summary of the farmers inputs from the meetings:

- The organic farming is, 2-3 years after start, still relatively small in scale from ½ ropani to 1 ropani (one ropani is 508,74 m² dvs. 22,55x22,55 m) The size of of a typical farm 10-15

ropani, some even 16 ropani while some are only a few ropani. Due to the limited size of the organic farming areas the organic farming is now primarily used for own consumption. Some are doing better and sell up to 75% of their vegetable productions in market. (In Denmark we would call it kitchen garden size)

- Many of the farmers have plans to increase the area used for organic farming, up to about 1 – 2 ropani and even 4 ropani in one of the farms.
- They are in general now self-sufficient with vegetables.
- They have reduced use and costs for pesticides and fertilizer
- The families do not keep a household account over expenses and income or what they earn from organic vegetables on the market
- Most families can see, that they have more money to buy school uniforms, books, seed etc. due to the fact, that they are now self-sufficient with vegetables and sell a little on market.
- They feel and see that the soil quality has improved after changing to ecological farming, citing that the soil has better structure, is less heavy, contains more soil animals as worms etc. and is better to absorb and hold back water. They would like the soil to be analyzed after some years producing organic products.
- Some say the health of the family is improved. Before, when they used chemicals fertilizers and pesticides, they had more headache and just feeling better due to better food.
- There are plenty of plants in the village areas to produce biopesticides and they share with other farmers if they have too much. *(it could be interesting to identify the plants and make research of the active substances in the different plants. Maybe a relevant study project for the university?)*
- The farmers have been trained (by the Triangle), in producing their own biopesticides and manure/compost for fertilization. After an initial smaller yield/smaller size of vegetables they now see a change to a better production.
- The farmers are satisfied with the new knowledge about how to improve the farming and would like to learn more about producing the whole year. They appreciate the training as well as plus the better cooperation between farmers - especially the sharing of knowledge and experiences on the monthly meetings. The Triangle organic farming project has been an eyeopener for many of the farmers.
- The lead farmers are in general helping and training the farmers in meetings and in the fields.
- Many of the farmers do have an insurance, but not all. The project had introduced an insurance scheme to minimize the risk of loss. This should help the farmers if attacked by insects, death of goats or other problems. Some farmers would like to hear more about the insurances, the price and the benefits.

2.3 Dialogue about the farmers benefits from the project and needs for improvements (activity 2.4)

The general feedback and impressions were that the Triangle program is successful, so far. The villages are satisfied and happy with the support they get from Danish families and the training

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and support they receive from Trianglen/CISU through ASK. They are also very interested in the organic farming project. It has opened their eyes for new possibilities.

The 5000 DKK Village Grants have helped the families into a process out of poverty and raised their living standards. The introduction of microloans seems to lead to improvements. The farmers have used the microloans for the purchase of goats, and it seems like they have repaid the micro loans.

The villages have used the funds primarily to buy goats and seeds. The procurement of goats has been important in order to produce enough manure for growing organic vegetables. *(Difficult to figure out the funds. Are they microloan, from Danish families, given to a single farmer a coop or a village)*

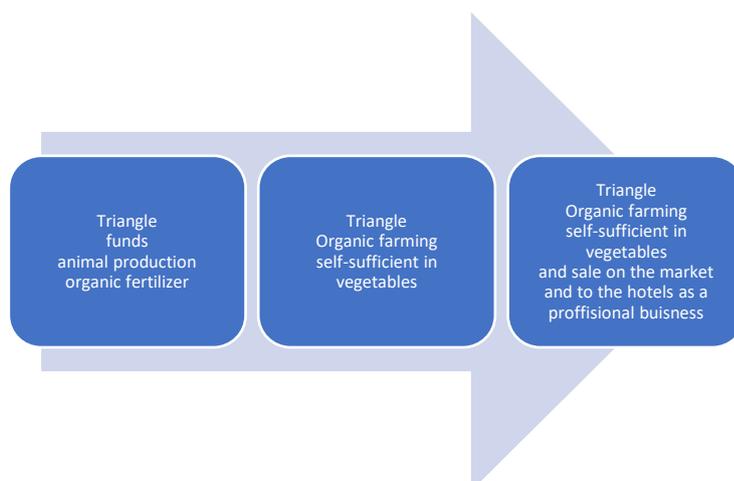
In most cases, farmers have become self-sufficient after the organic farming project started in 2015/16 and able to sell more or less to the market and hotels –.

Most of the farmers sell most of their organic products themselves, but a few use the collecting center regularly and think it works satisfactorily.

The forming of Village Committees (VC) with the initial purpose of deciding on the use of VF (*name?*) and with extensive training in SLP (*name?*), Social audit, Right to Information and project preparation has changed the mindset and outlook considerably. It has enabled villagers to take an active part in the decentralization reform process, that Nepal has been through since 2015 and which has led to more resources to the new municipalities, enabling them to support village development in many different ways (as mentioned in Henrik's report).

Needs and wishes for improvement

The overall impression is that step one and two has been carried out satisfactorily, but that the last step, to go commercial, is a major challenge. The organic production needs extra efforts before the organic vegetable production becomes a real business. The third step in the Kavre project requires focus on collection and marketing – if the project should be “Going from eye-opening, pilot project/good examples, self-sufficient” to organic farming business at bigger scale”.



The three project steps in Kavre District

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According to the answer of the questions and the discussions in the villages, the farmers recommend the following input.

1. Better Collection
2. Better prices and better marketing
3. Certifications of the organic products
4. Better farming equipment
5. Water supply for the whole year
6. Insurances for most of the farmers
7. Production whole year
8. More training for whole year production
9. Soil analysis
10. Use-oriented program and a long-term program

The recommendations and discussions with the farmers, were subsequently discussed with Badri and Sunita.

1. Better collection

Many farmers pointed out that a better collection system is needed.

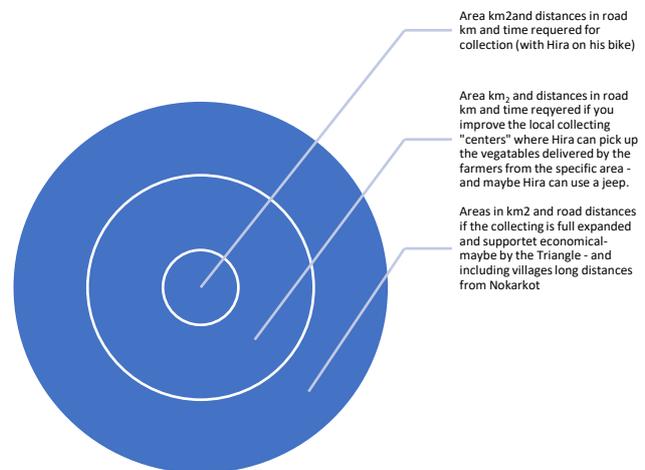
Having ambitions, money and workforce in the Triangle, it is recommended to significantly improve the collection and the way the collection system works. Maybe it should be expanded with some local collection points. It is too long distances to cover for one man and ensure delivery of fresh products to hotels. One could consider another remuneration system of the collector to improve the efficiency.

Clarifying questions

- Who is in charge off and who develops the CollectionCenter? Badri: *Comity/network farmers/Cooperative; the Chairman is responsible, Mr. Hira takes care of the distribution and the supply of the vegetables to the hotels. He stays in the Collecting Center. Hira gets his income from the collection and sale (is it 0/0 per kg or just from day to day profit (en provision ville øge hans incitement), et should be clear - transparency needed), he has some agreements with the hotels, Hira gets small money from the hotels, but he is not supported economically by the Triangle directly. The Cooperative is funding him. and the Cooperative gets money from Triangle Hira collect both non and organic veg, otherwise it would be too little to get in the villages.*
- Who takes care of the collection in practice? Who drives, owns the car and sell on market Badri and Sunita: *Hira collect all by his own motorbike and in a Jeep sometimes.*
- Do you have any plans to use CISU project funds for the expansion of the collection, to more villages and with timetables, better pricing etc., through the Collection Center? Badri: *yes, they try*
- Who takes these decisions? Badri: *The Network group of the chair (explanation, please).*

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The collection is a major challenge and can be expanded according to ambitions (if the goal is transforming the project to real business) and the economy of Triangle, etc.



2. Better price and better Marketing

Many farmers pointed out the need for better marketing. Most of the farmers get a better price, when they sell directly themselves. They think they should have a better price for the organic products, but they cannot prove to the costumers that their products are in fact organic.

It is recommended to revise the plan based on the latest statuses for sale by the farmers and the coop and in relation to how large their production is in total, both sale and consumption at home, 2-3 years after they have started with the organic production. Per village, coop and each farmer. See under Syangja

Clarifying questions

- Who is in charge for the marketing plan? *Badri: The Cooperative Management was in charge before, now it is the farmer network and the Triangle office. What is the role of Triangle/ASK?*
- Which period covers the marketing plan? *Badri: They made a plan two years ago. They do more and more. Before it was the Cooperative doing the marketing.*
- What are the short and the long-term goals? *I don't think they have any, I did not during my stay see the goals and activity plans.*

3. Certification of organic products

Almost all villages would appreciate very much if they could get a certificate. The farmers cannot prove to customers, such as the hotels, that the vegetables have been are cultivated organically.

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If this project wants to take the next step, and make the organic farming to a real business, it is recommended to give this area extra attention.

The proposal is to prepare a simple certification system based on international standards for small farms – or a “simplified Nepalese national certification system for organic farming”. But make it easily adapted to the size of the farms and quantities of products. You must be able to make audits with limited resources.

Certification generally involves a set of production standards for growing, storage, processing, packaging and shipping that include:

- avoidance of synthetic chemical inputs (e.g. fertilizer, pesticides, antibiotics, food additives), irradiation, and the use of sewage sludge
- avoidance of genetically modified seeds
- use of farmland that has been free from prohibited chemical inputs for a number of years (often, three or more). This means that documentaion is needed urgently in order to be able to certify individual farms wirhin the 3-year project durartion.
- for livestock, adhering to specific requirements for feed, housing, and breeding;
- keeping detailed written production and sales records (audit trail). This means that systematic systems for accounting at farm level must be developed and adopted as soon as possible. This will also provide useful information and documentation for the project reports
- maintaining strict physical separation of organic products from non-certified products;
- undergoing periodic on-site inspections. Could site inspections be organized through the district agricultural office?

Clarifying questions

- Are you going to certify some farms? *Badri: The farmer network group has plans and the Triangle/Badri.*
- Who is going to make the audit? *Badri : The Triangle/Municipalities*

Idea

A survey of whether hotel guests are more likely to choose hotels with organic food, which hotel guest type, and whether they are willing to pay more for organic vegetables. It could also include Danish agencies as for example Topas

Better farming equipment

Several farmers need more farming equipment or better sharing of equipment

Clarifying questions

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- Who decide buying new equipment? *Sunita: Farmer group decide what they are going to buy. Triangle/ASK also decides who is going to have equipment. They ask and give especially to the good farmers. There are no official criteria for assigning agricultural equipment.*

Comment: Systems for sharing of equipment should be a priority. Preferably equipment should be provided to the cooperative and not to individual farmers. Where equipment is provided directly to individual farmers it should be done in a transparent way based on agreed criteria in order to avoid risk of favoritism (or even just rumours of favoritism).

4. Water access all year round

Several villages have water shortages in part of the year.

It is a limiting factor for organic farming - particularly because water shortages are more common in the most productive growth seasons. Water supply/collection systems are important if the projects want to expand the organic vegetable production in all villages.

Clarifying questions

- The project could take initiative to a meeting with the authorities, introduce rainwater tanks, or provide training on how to water the fields with less use of water (time of the day, water spray etc.). Badri: The Triangle has already talked with the municipality, so the farmers should go and ask. (Maybe the farmers are not ready for that?)
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Idea

- Why don't you introduce a fiberglass watertank system and maybe a little drip irrigation system? You could for example select one or two villages as test-villages (water from periods of abundant water is stored to be used for dry periods/ or rainwater is collected.) One could consider letting the "accumulated funds" buy one or two tanks and use it for demonstration projects for others. Again, it is a financial balance to look at - investing in relation to profits. Maybe it will be a good investment to grow whole year as many farmers would like to.
- You (Triangle) should inspire or introduce the farmers to several water technical solutions incl prices - and support the farmers more to go to the authorities for applying (maybe it's not clear – their rights)

5. Insurances for most of the farmers

Several farmers did not use the insurances but would like to.

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Information in some of the villages is recommended. Is Triangle doing it? Or ASK and when?

Sunita: They can apply, and they must save money in a "bank". They shall go to the cooperative.

It is recommended with more information in the meetings with villages not so familiar with the insurance system

6. Production during the whole year

Several of the villages would like to have more training in organic farming production for the whole year - also off season. Particularly the new villages need training, but also the old villages need more training, if this project wants to develop the organic farming further in the region. Many of the farmers would appreciate more training for hole year production. Which vegetables can be grown in different seasons and the methods of growing.

Clarifying questions

- Who gives the training and what are the plans?

Sunita: The program manager, working at office in Nagarkot, made all the training the last years. She left however the project last year (got another job) She trained the farmers of agriculture and technician and reported to the district officer/main office. She did almost all the training and now the Triangle needs a new organic farming adviser. ASK/Nepal is sometimes doing training on and off - both the farmers and the lead-farmers.

- Are the Triangle looking for a new program adviser/trainer? And do you have the budget?
Badri: The lead-farmer, Tara and Sunita do the training. They hope they get money.
- Do you have a training guide and material? *Badri: Yes (it could be nice to see it and eventually reuse it in Syangja)*

It is recommended to focus om more training: A plan B is urgently needed now, where the program manager has left. It is, as far as I am oriented, unclear whether there is still money on the project to pay Sunita and Tara after spring 2019.

7. More training for whole year production

See nr. 7

8. Soil-analysis

Almost all farmers asked for soil-analysis after growing organic vegetables for some years. The farmers had generally experienced that the soil quality had become bad after 1-2 years with artificial chemical fertilizers and pesticides. They first had a very good production, but then it fell

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sharply then when the soil had become poor - they just had to buy more and more pesticides and chemical fertilizers. A more systematic approach to soil analysis is recommended, where samples are taken at all or at least a selection of farms. Analysis should cover basic soil parameters and possibly a test for chemicals if required for certification. Some system for documentation of improved soil quality is crucial for advocacy purposes and in order to document key assumptions in the project document.

9. User-oriented program and a long-term program

Several farmers/Villages would like Triangle to put more effort on user-oriented programs with more training and support to the farms in practical organic farming and marketing. Several also found it important, that it is/will be a long-term project. It takes time to introduce organic farming, to manage the production, to get certificate and to make a good marketing – to make it a real business.

Clarifying questions

- Does the Triangle project have a plan for the organic project for, as for example, the next five years? And are there plans for making the project more user-oriented?

Badri: It depend on the findings from Denmark and also the cooperation with the municipalities. The coop? Meet every 3 months with the Ward office. Reports what the villages are using funds for. Sends report to the Triangle and the Municipalities.

It is recommended to focus more on step 3 going more commercial. The foundation is pretty much in place, so it will be a pity not to get collection and a better marketing to work.

In addition to the above input I agree with Henrik that;

- The Triangle should consider its working relations with the Nepali partners in Kavre, as this seems very based upon personal as much as professional relationships.
- The Triangle should ensure that the reporting from villages is balanced and reflects facts, rather than being overly positive.
- Triangle and ASK should continue to monitor and develop the planning, RTI and similar democracy institutions in the "old" villages for some years. (*what is RTI?*)
- Introducing organic farming has also been promising so far with an increasing support from the (limited number of) farmers involved in Kavre, despite problems encountered when changing from trad. to organic. CISU has just agreed to a project extending the scheme to Syangja where there also is a noticeable interest to get involved. In Kavre, more and more farmers, although still a minority and mainly women, express interest in joining as are new villages in Kavre.
- The question of marketing and pricing of the organic vegetables needs attention and need special focus also in Kavre. It should be under way and may prove promising.

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I found also many useful suggestions in the report made by Anne Vibeke Thorsen, KU, April 2018, about the collecting and the marketing, which should positively be used.

4. Pick out suggestions for indicator improvements relevant for the Syangja project

While the project in Kavre was aimed at demonstrating how civil society could be strengthened through the organization of the farms with a focus on sustainable farming methods, and to show that the market for the products can give an advance, the Syangja project is planning to go one step further. Strengthening civil society remains a key objective, but the plan is that the farmers are going to sell their products through an open market through the cooperative.

The Syangja project, has an ambition of making this organic farming project to a role model and hopefully to be spread out and used in general in Nepal (in the hill areas).

Bases on the quick analyses in Kavre District, I would suggest, among others, that special attention be given to the following indicators:

The data need to be evidence based

Due to the goals of the project it is urgent to focus on data and to refine some of the baseline indicators aiming the overall LFA indicators and the projects ambitions and goal.

It can be recommended to select the most important indicators (due to your budget) and make them evidence based (and make sure that you are able to make status every year/every second year). If you not have the resources to do it for all the farmers, select some villages (different types) do not only follow the leadfarmers, but all the farmers to get a representative picture.

It is very important that you can prove, by facts, that it in reality is a better way - both agronomically, ecological and economical - way to do farming. In my opinion, it is a must that the project empirically actually can prove that it is a more optimal and effective way of cultivating - both economically, agronomically - and ecologically in the long term. It will immediately be a major weakness of the project if you cannot prove / document the results. The challenge is to make this project credible enough to be used as a model for Nepal, as stated in the project document – a high ambition - and not just make local efforts for the currently involved farmers in the two districts (a one-night stand)

Marketing and commercializing

The commercial part will be a very big challenge in this project. The commercial part still needs improvements in Kavre, special the collecting is still a challenge, the prizes, the certification to prove the organic products. In the Kavre the direct dialog with the hotels is already established, but one could, with good reasons, make better daily or weekly coordination between the supply and the demand in order to improve the supply security - and thus optimize sales. Most people do have mobile phones, so it would not be impossible for the farmers to report which vegetables and how many kg and when they will be ready - how many kg approx. "they have in stock".

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In the Syangja projects the distances are long and before the farmers have a production big enough for the commercial market – and for collection – is a long journey, it will take time.

Since there is currently no legislation for the promotion and regulation of organic production, the project's advocacy activities will be directed at the influence of the political and administrative system on both decentralized and central issues in relation to initiatives in favor of organic production and marketing.

Buiseness plan

As described in the Syangja project application, the project will particularly prioritize the issue of marketing and are going to develop a realistic business plan for Syangja – maybe this plan can also be inspiring for Kavre district. It could be fine to develop some business examples with more concrete calculations - for example for a farmer, a village and a COOP.

Farmers accounts:

Income and expenses need to be more specified. It should be developed, and the farmers trained, so the Triangle/ASK and the farmers can follow the development. Now it is just what they see/feel. And the prices from the vegetables sold by the Collecting center in Nagarkot-monthly status.

Soil analyzes:

Start, baseline – after 3 years – is also connecting to the certification (Syngja has a goal of 15 farmers to be certified)

Produced quantities of vegetables per unit area

Soil Ropanies used for organic vegetable production: Per ropani, per farm, per village and total – decide the time intervals ex. per year or per second year.

Kavre/Triangle local office register the number of kg for each village (and farmer?) produced per month total and per type of vegetable and the prices they get.

It could be interesting to look at the production related to ropanies, for example vegetable yield per ropany per month, year-round, with the natural variations that occur with the different seasons. Then one will also have an overview of whether the farmers grow vegetables on expanding ropanies over time - or whether is the production per ropani increases Productivity and income per ropani would be valuable information to feed into both advocacy and improved business cases.

Annexes

Annex A: Questionnaires for village visits

Annex B: Timetable

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Annex C: Village reports

- Village 51, Gairigaun
- Village 53 Chhapgaun
- Village 55, Haledegaun
- Village 56, Dhandagaun
- Village 59, Sathikuryia
- New village, Ward 3

Annex E: Syangja project timetable

Annex F: Baseline indicators and suggestions for the Syangja project

Annex G: LFA indicators evaluation