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Making Rice Paddy Compatible with Wetland Conservation Objective

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The overall objective of the paper is to make rice paddies compatible with the objectives of wetland conservation in Nepal so that rice cultivation meets simultaneously two-pronged objectives of increasing its production to reduce poverty and enhancing its biodiversity as wetland system. Rice fields and paddies are synonymous. Rice that is grown in rice fields is “life for almost half the planet’s population”. According to the Ramsar’s Classification System for Wetland Type, rice paddies are one of the types of wetlands under the category of human-made wetlands. Rice paddies provide important ecosystem functions such as serving as an important source of nutrition to billions of people all over the world, major source of income and employment for the poor. They are biologically important because it provides habitat for reptiles, amphibians, fish, crustaceans, insects and mollusks as well as stopover for migratory waterfowl. They also support the ecosystems through the protection of soil from erosion and water-induced disaster.

Then second half of the paper discusses rice cultivation at the highest altitude of 3,150 m. in Nepal. Major issues such the rice needing some 3,000 liters of water to produce just one kg of rice, problems caused by the extinction of traditional varieties of rice and striking a balance between raising productivity and conservation are also discussed. Finally the paper explores some research issues that need to be taken up by all to promote the Ramsar Resolution X: 31 “Enhancing biodiversity in rice paddies as wetland systems”.