

AMBITIOUS FARMERS

Around the world



Almost 700.000 farmers, organised in more than 250 cooperatives

**AGRI
TERRA**



FOR COOPERATIVES



INTRODUCTION

Ambitious farmers around the world

Agriterra reaches almost 700,000 farmers, organised in more than 250 cooperatives.

We interviewed 8 farmers from Nepal (2), Peru, Uganda (2), Philippines, China and Ethiopia to find out if their situation has been changed since they are member of a cooperative.

How was their situation several years ago (or before their membership), what has happened during their membership, what were the most significant changes in their situation and how did the changes come about?

Read their stories...

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Agriterra is an agri-agency founded by the Dutch agricultural sector and professionalises cooperatives and farmer organisations worldwide to better serve the needs and interests of their members. By their success they make an important contribution to employment and sustainable economic development.

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PABITRA KHATRI

NEPAL

Female farmer and board member of Barboteli Tea Producer Cooperative Society Ltd.

Age: 40

Member since: 2011

District/region: Ilam

Village: Dharapani

Pabitra Khatri lives in a family of 5 in total. Her family consists of Pabitra herself, her husband, their 2 daughters and 1 son. They have 1 cow and 1 calf.

After connecting with a member of the Board of directors and other members of the Barboteli Tea Producer cooperative Society Ltd. in 2011, Pabitra became a cooperative member.

She is a person who has wanted to learn since childhood. The main reason to become a member of the cooperative was to become socially active.

'I became a member of the cooperative to connect with people and to learn more about cooperatives and tea and to acquire knowledge to empower women.'



Vast knowledge

Her participation in the programme, training and workshop conducted by the Central Tea Cooperative Federation Ltd (CTCF) helped Pabitra to gain a vast knowledge about cooperatives, techniques of organic tea farming, tea picking and occupational safety and health. This led to economic growth and to her living a healthier lifestyle.

Previously women were not empowered, and they were limited to only do household work, but now women are socially active and are contributing a lot to the progress of society.

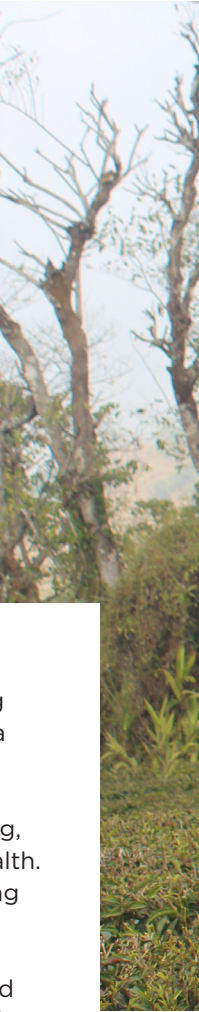
Women who are involved in their cooperative are active and contribute in supporting their families as much as the men do.

Increase

With the increase in productivity Pabitra extended the tea plantation. She is also well known as a tea farmer producing high quantity and quality tea leaves in a relatively small area through good agricultural practises and organic farming.

Now she is in the board of her tea cooperative she can facilitate and empower other members and women of her cooperative. Men/women are now better off economically because of their cooperative.

Pabitra also realised an increase in the price of green leaves by 3 NPR per kilogram due to an increase in collective bargaining after becoming a member of the tea cooperative. Along with this, cooperative women have enhanced their leadership abilities, skills and have become experts about health and safety in the workplace.





Significant changes

Those changes are significant as women's participation on the board and as members has created a suitable environment for growing together. Her cooperative female members are now handling both household work as well as contributing to economic growth through qualitative, as well as sustainable (organic) tea farming. Increasing leadership ability has accelerated the economic, social, cultural and environmental growth of the community. Cooperative members are now able to minimise hazards and maintain safety in the workplace after participating in the trainings, as well as following the workshop on occupational safety and health. The realisation of their own factory provides employment opportunities as well as making cooperative members aware of tea processing technology. Finally, the awareness that 'women can do this too' was the most significant change in society in a country like Nepal.

BARBOTELI TEA PRODUCER COOPERATIVE SOCIETY LTD.

Total members: 85 men and 30 women

In 2018 the cooperative was able to establish its own tea processing factory, which is a milestone.

'My participation in the tea cooperative made me strong. I feel I can tackle any type of difficulty and can overcome any problems, whether it be farming, cooperative work or family issues.'

HADGU GEBREMEDHIN

ETHIOPIA

Female farmer

Age: 24

Member of Waldiba Primary Cooperative

Member since: 2013

District/region: Tigray region

Village: Maicha in Welkait

Hadgu Gebremedhin has grown up in the Tigray region of Ethiopia. She lived in a large family and found it difficult to live together with so many people.

Growing up she made and sold tea. This provided her with a very small income. In 2013, at the age of 18, she moved out and decided to go into farming too, as this would create a higher income. She had relatives who were already farmers and they provided her with the necessary knowledge.

That year she started renting land to produce different crops. At this moment Hadgu rents 3 to 4 hectares of land. She produces onions, tomatoes, cabbages and sesame seeds (she uses 2 to 3 hectares, depending on the rain and the situation of the soil).

Hadgu became member of Waldiba Primary Cooperative to get credit, fertilizer, seeds, pesticide and to get input related benefits. When she invests more, she can get more dividend.

‘The improvement of the cooperative also leads to improvement of the farms.’



Changes

By becoming a farmer, and with the help of the cooperative, she is now getting a higher income and has started her own household. Without the cooperative it would have been almost impossible for Hadgu to have done this.

She needed the cooperative in order to get credit at a low interest rate. Local moneylenders charge a very high rate of interest. She needed the credit for renting the land and for paying the temporary staff who help her with the weeding and harvesting.

The previous six years the cooperative has improved in many ways and the farm of Hadgu and her life have improved in many ways too. For example, the cooperative improved the output and the access to markets for their members, so Hadgu gets a fair price for her products. Without the cooperative the farmers would have no other option then to sell their products to local traders, who often force farmers to sell at a low price.

In the last few years the financial management of the cooperative has improved too and Hadgu got dividend from the cooperative twice. The total membership increased and the cooperative now has 1802 members. There are 4 men and 1 woman on the board and in the controlling committee there are 2 men and 1 woman. At this moment Hadgu is the secretary of this controlling committee.

Higher yield

The improvement in the quality of seeds leads to better quality of crops and a higher yield. There is a bigger variety of seeds available which leads to better quality and improvement of production too.



There is a bigger variety of pesticides and the service from the cooperative is improving. There are more trainings in the field of leadership, banking, credit, bookkeeping etc., therefore the farmers have more knowledge and can produce more crops of higher quality and this leads to more income.

‘The cooperative is like my mother; When I need seeds, the cooperative will give them to me; When I need credit, the cooperative will give it to me and when I need training, the cooperative prepares me for it.’

Female leadership

Hadgu joined a Female Leadership Training with 38 other participants. She told the other participants that it is important that more women are becoming members of a cooperative and that more women should participate in the board of a cooperative too. At the end of the training the participants made ambitious action plans for their own cooperative.

WALDIBA PRIMARY COOPERATIVE

Total members: 1802
1440 men and 362 women



RICHARD ROY PÉREZ VILLANUEVA

PERU

President of the board members

Age: 35

Member of Central Cacao de Aroma

Member since: 2014

District/region: San Martin region



Richard Roy Pérez from Peru belongs to the San Martin region. Since 2014, he is the president of the board members of the cooperative Central Cacao de Aroma de Tocache, a second degree cooperative with six grassroot cooperatives.

‘Being a member of the cooperative allows me to have access to the cooperative’s business and financing linkages.’

Many changes

In 2014, Central Cacao de Aroma de Tocache started the cooperation with Agriterra to improve cooperativism in the areas of governance, administration, supervisory board members and other aspects.

Before the cooperation they were already working with the different grassroot cooperatives and sharing experiences with them, but they still had to consolidate the knowledge of all the cooperatives and managers.

Richard Roy Pérez: “We have experienced many changes: Several managers have received various trainings that have strengthened good business as well as economic and social management of the cooperative. As a result, our partners’ leaders and managers have also strengthened their capacities to better perform their tasks. Personally, I have strengthened my performance and my duties as a president of the board members.”



MUGISHA CRESCENT

UGANDA

President of the board members

Age: 28

**Member of Rukiga Savings and Credit Scheme
Cooperative Society (RSACCO)**



My 2018 life changing master class

“In the early 2018, I was excited upon being selected for the Youth Leadership Master Class in the Netherlands. I honestly didn’t know what to expect of this magical opportunity, because it was not only going to be my first time in the Netherlands but also my first time to move out of my country and the first time to travel by air but most importantly that I was about to get exposed to first class agricultural systems and that I was about to be referred to my dream title “Mr president” for all the days I would spend in the Netherlands.

On 6th October 2018, I was in the Netherlands to embark on a life changing mission for me and for my country. I must confess that the state of art infrastructure caught my eyes on the first sight and the friendliness of the Dutch people. For the next nine days, I joined my other colleagues to form a strongly bonded family and an extra two days with the wonderful Orange Corners youth.

From the farm side home to very inspiring trainers to very loving guides to the policy makers interactions to city tours to farm and cooperatives visits to the youth leadership academy to the buddy visits to the Kucheza game to the recap sessions and to the orange corner youth leadership empowering programs. This was all so inspiring, empowering, enriching, educative and life changing lessons to me and I will always be grateful for this golden opportunity.

To me, the most outstanding lessons I carried home were farm succession, agricultural policy regulations, agricultural mechanisation, leadership with humility, building strong cooperatives, infrastructure planning and development, the Kucheza game and historical sites preservation.

But most importantly that my dream to become my country’s president was strengthened and modelled and am confident that when that time comes, I will lead a government that will transform my country Uganda into a first world country and Africa in general.

I will keep moving forward...”



JORDAN MENDANIA

PHILIPPINES

Young farmer and member of Sorosoro Ibaba Development Cooperative (SIDC)

Age: 31

Member since: 2013

District/region: Barangay Callejon, San Antonio, Quezon

Village: Quezon

Jordan Mendania is a pig farmer and pig feed outlet proprietor from the Philippines. He is a member of the Sorosoro Ibaba Development Cooperative (SIDC), the biggest primary agricultural cooperative in the country.

He comes from a farming family. His father owns a rice mill and farm land and he also raises pigs and grows fruit and vegetables. His mother passed away in 2008 after Jordan graduated from college. He has two sisters, one is also a member of SIDC, while the other one is ready to become a member.

He used to have a normal and simple life. He considers their life before becoming a member of the cooperative as average. "My income before mainly came from a small 'sari-sari' or multi-purpose store that I took over from my mother. I was earning a net profit of around 20,000 Philippine pesos (340 Euro) per month, which was just enough for our basic needs," he says.

'With the SIDC feed, I immediately experienced a much higher harvest of fattener pigs.'



Starting the business

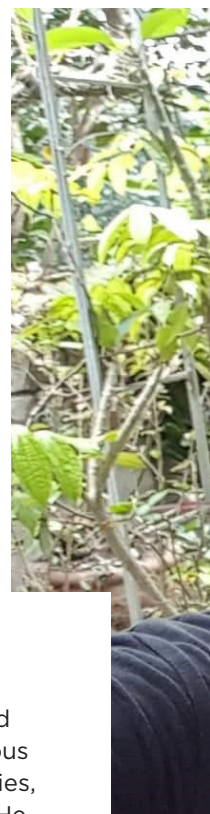
In 2008 Jordan started a small pig raising business with 5 sows. He added 5 more and started to raise piglets too. With the previous feeds that he bought from private companies, he only broke even or earned a low profit. He was paying for expensive feeds, but of poor quality.

In 2010 he married Shaima-Fatima Ali who is a college professor in Tanauan and chairperson of her faculty. They now have 2 daughters. In 2013 he became a member of SIDC. A SIDC agent came to his house to offer him pig feed. He was just looking for new pig feed and he found out that the cooperative's feed is of a good quality. He tried it and had good results.

Expanding the business

After seeing his success with the use of feeds, the SIDC main office offered Jordan to run a main feed outlet of his own as the San Antonio feeds outlet was no longer sufficient to meet the growing demand. He said yes because of the good quality of the feed. "I started with sales of 500-600 bags per month. Then it increased to 1,000-1,500 bags per month. There are lean and peak months, but overall, I always meet my quota of 500 bags per month," says Jordan.

At first, he was just borrowing a jeepney from father for his feed outlet business. But with the growing customer base, he was soon able to buy a truck with a loan from SIDC. The loan came with very low interest rates compared to that of a bank. He also earned a patronage refund for every transaction. His income now comes from his feed outlet, pig raising and side-line trucking of feeds. "I am now able to earn 50,000 to P100,000 Philippine pesos per month," he says.





Improving family situation

For Jordan and his family, the most significant change that happened was that the SIDC business of pig raising and the feeds outlet operation became their main source of income. “All our needs are now being provided for by the SIDC business. This has created a very big impact on our lives, as the income is enough to take care of the education of our daughter and our daily expenses,” he says.

Through the loan from SIDC, he was able to buy a car for his family, a tricycle, a motorcycle and a piece of land. He also saves up a certain amount to re-invest in his growing business.

He is now renovating his piggery. The existing building has a capacity of 23 sows. He is putting up a new building that has the capacity to hold 200 fattener pigs. He plans to keep the sows and the fatteners in separate buildings to create the best conditions for them.

Benefiting the community

He has also noticed a huge change in the community when more residents became a member of the cooperative. Other pig raisers in his community used to have difficulty in raising them and other animals. Feeds were expensive and of poor quality. But now, they are very happy.

SOROSORO IBABA DEVELOPMENT COOPERATIVE

SIDC is the biggest primary agricultural cooperative in the country with 31,000 members and total assets of 3 billion Philippine pesos. Its businesses include feed milling, contract growing of pigs, a cooperative market and supermarket and a savings and credit facility.

Jordan says that SIDC has been a big help to its members. It has many programmes, like low interest loans for feeds and “paiwi” or contract growing of pigs. “Lots of members have similar experiences of an improved life due to SIDC. And there are still a lot of people who want to become a member,” he says.

In the coming years, he plans to further expand his business and raise more pigs. He also wants to bring the services of SIDC to more customer members through his feeds outlet. He sometimes delivers feed to customers for free, as long as they keep buying from him. He also gives free advice on how to feed and how to take care of the pigs. Lastly, he also encourages customer members to keep their business growing so that both they and the cooperative will benefit long into the future.

TANG WENKANG

CHINA

Chairman of Yubi Bloody Orange Cooperative

Age: 56

Member since: 2008 (one of the founders)

District/region: Chongqing city, Southwest

Village: Yifeng village

Tang Wenkang used to do business in another city, but when his mother got ill he came back to look after her. In his hometown he found old people and children without family care, lacking stable sources of income and no community care. A friend, who is a doctor, started planting oranges as his hobby and together they came up with the idea to start a cooperative and to grow oranges in the surrounding towns.

Difficult start

Many farmers worked outdoors and young people live far away from the hometowns in the cities. Older people and children had poor living conditions, there was no care, no surplus income and no community activities. The rural roads in the Yifeng Township were bad and driving was difficult. The surrounding communities were also poor, a large area of farmland was abandoned and the soil erosion was a serious problem.

'The hometown is now a family community again.'



The start was difficult, because in the beginning many farmers were refusing to join the cooperative since there were no direct economic benefits.

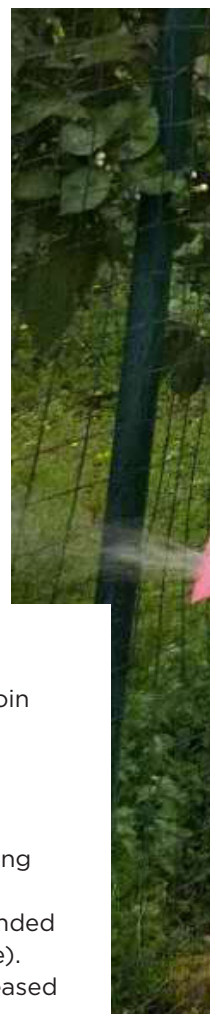
Changes

Some significant changes took place for Tang Wenkang and his surroundings.

1. The cooperative orchard size has expanded from 400 to 10000 mu (15 mu=1 hectare). The yearly income per farmer has increased from 8,000 RMB to 30,000 RMB.
2. The country roads now lead directly to every small orchard of the cooperative with clear signposts on the road to promote agri-tourism, which was suggested by Agriterra and supported by the local government.
3. An orange processing factory has been built and the final products are being sold in a wide area. Agriterra supported this with advice about product design and promotion.
4. More farmers in nearby counties want to join the cooperative and grow Tarocco oranges. If you go to the township now, you will see orchards mountain to mountain with a beautiful colour display, especially during the harvesting season. Many tourists from the cities come to the cooperative to get oranges, which also promotes the service industry in the county.

Back to hometown

The policy of rural revitalisation in China, from the perspective of ordinary people, is to utilise local resources to develop rural industries to attract young people to come back to their hometowns.





They can develop businesses now, thus creating a good income and therefore will be able to care for their families. They are bringing the hometown's agricultural development back to life, creating more opportunities and they are making their hometown more beautiful and liveable. Mr. Tang; "It was extremely worthwhile for us to have made these efforts. We received a lot of support from external organisations like Agriterra. The hometown is now a family community again."

Almost all the farmers in the cooperative share the same thoughts. One of the female members shared that she has benefitted a lot from the cooperative and the citrus industry here. She returned from the city to take of her family. Her family now has a small orange orchard and they have opened a local specialty restaurant for Agri-tourism. Yubi Cooperative supported them with technical services and marketing. They can sell their oranges to the cooperative too and earn about 200,000 RMB annually.

YUBI BLOODY ORANGE COOPERATIVE

Total members: 424 men and 200 women

The processing factory is processing orange wine.



RUTH NAMAGANDA

UGANDA

Member of Kibinge Coffee Farmers Cooperative Society

Age: 29

District/region: Bukomansimbi, Greater Masaka district

Ruth Namaganda was born in Katete, Mbarara district in western Uganda in a family consisting of 14 kids. Ruth was the 9th and only girl in this household. Ruth's father was a cattle keeper and banana farmer. At age 25 she moved away from home and through her brother she was able to start as a store keeper in Bukomansimbi, Greater Masaka District.

During this time she noticed there was a lot of arable land lying idle in the surrounding communities. After one year she quit her job as a storekeeper and took her savings and started renting land in the neighbourhood that was lying idle. She reclaimed land from nature and turned it into productive farmland growing maize and groundnuts.

Next to this she started four women VSLA's (Village Savings & Loans Associations). Currently these saving groups have in total 97 active female members that save between 1000 - 5000 UGX per week. From the 97 VSLA group members there is a group of 9 women that offer agricultural services to other farmers. Cultivation, planting and harvesting are their main activities.

In 2016 these groups were noticed by John Mark Kasule, Operations manager of Kibinge Coffee Farmers Cooperative Society (KCFCS). In order to learn more about the organisational capacities of Ruth he invited her for a financial management training at the cooperative. From then on Ruth started to become an active member of KCFCS and more and more started assisting the management in their day to day activities.

'My objective is to make the idle land productive for economic and social transformation.'

Youth council

Together with John Mark and Grace Nakacwa (accountant) Ruth has initiated the establishment of the Kibinge youth council at KCFCS in 2017. Currently it has 197 active members that are engaged in farming and dialogue with the cooperative board about its future direction. Ensuring that the next generation is groomed early on in order to secure the succession plan of KCFCS. The Kibinge youth council meets with the board every two months. And it meets with the village youth councils every week to ensure the youth is well represented in the board.

The Kibinge youth council, under supervision of Ruth, has been involved in the setup of farm management services and coffee trading services it now offers to the cooperative.

Farm management

Farm management within KCFCS was started in January 2018 and has so far generated 181 new jobs for the youth. Kibinge farm management takes care of the farms of elderly members,



widows and land owners that prefer their land to be fully managed by the cooperative society. Currently KCFCS is managing 62 farms.

The main aim of the farm management services offered by Kibinge is to increase productivity of the land surrounding Bukomansimbi. Highly contributing to the economic activity generated in the area. Since the land owners are also members of the cooperative, the cooperative only deducts the real cost made by the farm management department. Which are in turn deducted from the turnover of the specific farms during the marketing season. The added value for the cooperative is its ability to manage quality, quantity and continuity of coffee supply coming from its members and at the same time increasing the overall productivity of the total arable land area available in Bukomansimbi. This leading to the generation of new jobs and contributing to the economic and social transformation of this rural area in Uganda.

Ruth together with four other youths has the responsibility to oversee the performance of the farms that are managed by the youth council.

Engaging women

The main issue Ruth has faced in her leadership journey is the difficulty of engaging the women in the cooperative activities. She faces a lot of resistance from the husbands of these women that are hired by the cooperative. The independence that these women enjoy after receiving payed employment through the cooperative creates an imbalance within the traditional structures of the households. However with strong commitment from the cooperative board and management Ruth is continuing her struggle for equality among men and women in rural Uganda through involving them in economic activities surrounding the coffee value chain. All activities made available by and accessed through the cooperative in which Ruth has played a vital role designing and scaling them.

A real leader

Agriterra sees in Ruth the determination and strategic thinking necessary to succeed as a leader. Combined with the innovativeness that are characteristic for the youth she has been able to take the Dutch concept of the cooperative youth council and adapt it in such a way that it contributes significantly to the needs and aspirations of the rural youth in her surroundings.



KIBINGE COFFEE FARMERS COOPERATIVE

Total members: 1461

The core business of Kibinge is processing of coffee and export to Fairtrade and Utz certified buyers in Europe and the USA.

The goal of the cooperative: 'We want to be a leading coffee coop with exceptional quality, excellent prices, processing at own facility. We also want to improve lives in the community.'

To initiate and organise the youth structure from village level all the way to the cooperative as well as taking on the responsibility to manage 62 farms (and counting) and now setting up the Kibinge Youth Traders association shows she is a very confident and skillfull leader.

DILLI RAM KHATIWADA

NEPAL

Young farmer and member of Sanimai Tea Producer Cooperative Society Ltd.

Age: 29

Member since: 2011

District/region: Ilam /Mechi

Village: Sulubung

The family of Dilli Ram Khatiwada consists of 6 members: his grandmother, his father, his mother, his wife and his son. They have 1 cow.

Dilli Ram joined the Sanimai Tea Producer Cooperative Society Ltd. after he felt the necessity for a collective voice for all farmers and for the promotion and marketing of tea. The reason for his involvement in the cooperative was to tackle the problem of middlemen, who were giving low prices for green leaves of tea.

Dilli Ram is also a member of the youth committee of his tea cooperative and currently he is also involved in the marketing of tea products of his cooperative.

‘After becoming a member of the cooperative I was confident to get a better price for green tea leaves, because of the collective bargaining power.’

In the past

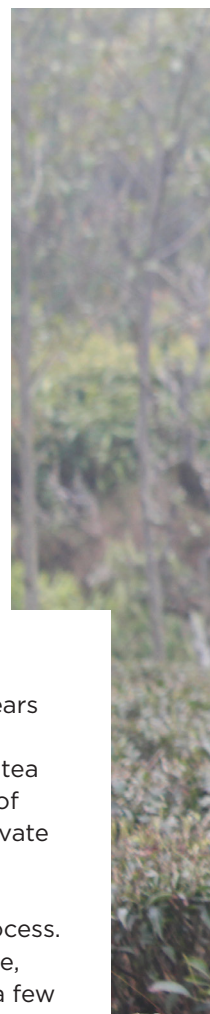
Comparing the situation to that of a few years ago, tea farmers were lacking proper and adequate education and techniques about tea farming. Their source of income consisted of selling green leaves to middlemen or to private tea factories.

Youths weren't engaged in the working process. Before the establishment of the cooperative, sharing knowledge was very limited. Only a few people were able to provide a quality education to their children. Therefore, due to the lack of knowledge technology and low economic growth people were not able to achieve a good standard of living.

Capacity building

Capacity building is the most significant change that took place for Dilli Ram as well as for his surroundings. Becoming a young farmer and a member of his cooperative he grabbed various opportunities to participate in the programmes conducted by his cooperative as well as by the Central and District Tea Cooperative Federation.

He also achieved an increase in the price of green leaves by 5 NPR per kilogram due to the collective bargaining. Before, he wasn't aware of the technology of tea farming nor for tea processing, but now he takes care of his tea plantation himself, he shares knowledge and he has become an employee of the tea factory of his cooperative.





Economic growth

Dilli Ram achieved leadership skills from the capacity building training programmes. Now he and the other participants are motivated and inspire many more people around the world.

They are producing quality products which automatically lead to economic growth for their families. Because of the economic growth they are now able to spend money on the health and education of family members. Many youths used to go abroad in search of job opportunities, but now the cooperative industry has become a great platform for providing job opportunities to many youths in Nepal.

Cooperatives have also transformed farmers to entrepreneurs, providing a better price for their products as well as increasing youth involvement. These are the most significant changes that took place.

SANIMAI TEA PRODUCER COOPERATIVE SOCIETY LTD.

Total members: 83 men and 62 women

With the joint effort of cooperative members, Sanimai Tea Producer Cooperative was able to establish its own tea processing factory.

‘To gain knowledge and increase prices were the most significant changes that took place.’



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