

PASTORALISM WITHIN THE HOUSEHOLD ECONOMY: A CASE OF SHEEP HERDERS IN EAST NEPAL

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Most studies of pastoral economies have analyzed livestock production using income-expenditure analysis. For South Asian transhumant herders, however, pastoralism constitutes only part of the household economy because pastoralists have their own villages where they engage in agriculture or other jobs. Therefore, this paper examines the balance of pastoralism within the total household economy.

Field research involved shepherds from Rumjatar, a village in East Nepal. This village has experienced recent diversification with respect to jobs other than those involved in pastoralism. For example, the last 20 years have seen increases in both education levels and labor migration to other countries. However, these changes have not necessarily resulted in a reduced income from pastoralism. First, income from livestock differs; household flocks may range from a few heads to more than 500. Second, small herders can invest income from livestock to increase the size of their flock, provided they have enough land to feed their family. Third, some herders have reduced the size of their flock by buying land or have retired from pastoralism.

The balance of pastoralism within the household economy is considerably influenced by jobs outside of pastoralism. It also changes historically; pastoralism has worked more effectively for some farmers than for others.

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