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# Youth in agriculture: The way forward

REPUBLICA

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A two day long 'First Youth Agriculture Entrepreneurship Conference' was organized by 4H Nepal – an independent youth lead organization committed to empowerment and development of rural youth – at the Department of Agriculture Hall in Harihar Bhawan, Kathmandu.

For 4H Nepal, the meeting of different agricultural professionals, experts, policy makers, government and political stakeholders was imagined to act as a melting point to start fruitful discourse on challenges faced by young people engaged in agriculture.

The conference saw sessions from experts who delivered presentations on farming therapy, progressive agro based enterprise practices and innovative marketing strategies. In the closing day, a separate session was dedicated to young agro entrepreneurs to share their experience as young entrepreneurs.

Angaraj Bharati from Jumla shared his dissatisfaction on government's agriculture loan schemes. "When you have a particular skill, you think investments will automatically pour your way but in Nepal the banking sector is still not welcoming towards farmers who want to commercialize their occupation," he said. For the past two years Bharati is in a constant battle with the Nepal Rastra Bank to get his loan passed. Still his frustrations haven't changed his mind to look for foreign employment.

"Entrepreneurship is all about risk bearing ability," said Deep-



BIJAY RAI/REPUBLICA

endra Aryal, who is a mandarian and coffee producer from Syangja. Though for the past three years his business is facing a loss of Rs 60 lakhs, he only takes them as minor setbacks that have helped him grow more. And at the moment, he is working to develop a web display system for mandarian producers to track the demand for the products and systematically identify market possibilities.

Shyam Chhatkuli was also one of the participants in the panel. Chhatkuli had the opportunity to visit Israel and learn farming there. "Nepal can learn a lot from Israel.

We boast about our water resources but are still following feudal agricultural practices, while Israel is a desert region and still they have a highly sophisticated agricultural industry," he said. After returning back, he has already started working on his fishery farm for a year and hopes to expand his enterprise in the coming years.

Nepal is perennially plagued with the label that it is an 'agricultural country'. But the ground reality of Nepal's agriculture sector reveals the label to be just a false mask. In the fiscal year 2012/2013 it was reported that we spend about

Rs 100 billion in importing agro based products. With escalating demands in a declining economy, young entrepreneurs have realized the need to call for an agricultural revolution that can help Nepal's agriculture sector to rise from the slump.

"This type of youth conference is just a stepping stone towards a progressive future for Nepal's agriculture sector. We hope that we were able to provide a platform where young entrepreneurs could form a network and help each other," said Lok Raj Awasthi, the president of 4H Nepal.