NR04 / Understanding Policy Capacity Determinants in Agricultural Policymaking: Evidence from Asia and Africa

Topic : Research

Chair : Yadav Humagain (Agriculture and Forestry University)

GENERAL OBJECTIVES, RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND SCIENTIFIC RELEVANCE

Agriculture-dependent countries across Asia and Africa are increasingly prioritizing evidence-based policymaking to enhance food security, climate resilience, and farmer livelihoods. However, the effectiveness of agricultural policies is shaped not only by state institutions but also by the capacities of a broad range of non-state policy actors. This panel brings together seven empirically grounded studies examining policy actors, dimensions of policy capacity, determinants of effective policymaking, and parameters for assessing policy capacity across Bhutan, China, India, Nepal, Rwanda, and Uganda.

The panel is anchored in four complementary theoretical lenses. Policy Capacity Theory identifies what capacities are required and guides the analysis of seven core determinants: knowledge, skills, political abilities, ethical standards, institutional ability, systemic ability, and policy leadership. Governance Theory explains how diverse state and non-state actors interact within policy arenas. Evidence-Based Policymaking Theory highlights how evidence, data, and analytical principles shape forward and backward policy processes. Systems Theory further clarifies how these subsystems integrate to form an effective and coherent policy capacity system.

The research is driven by four central questions: (i) What is the present state of policy capacity gap within existing agricultural policies in Nepal? (ii) What factors determine the policy capacity, and how can they be measured? (iii) Which policy capacity parameters have been assessed in Asia–Africa reference countries, and what lessons can Nepal draw from them?

Correspondingly, the study aims: (i) to examine existing policy capacity gap in Nepal’s agricultural sector; (ii) to determine key factors influencing policy capacity; and (iii) to document common policy capacity parameters used in six selected countries for comparative learning.

By integrating multi-country evidence with a strong theoretical foundation, the panel deepens understanding of agricultural policy capacity and offers practical insights for strengthening policy systems and governance across the Global South.

Expected Contribution of the Panel

This panel advances the conceptual understanding of policy capacity by examining its core determinants, including knowledge, skills, political ability, ethical standards, institutional ability, systemic ability, and policy leadership. It offers comparative, evidence-based insights into how both state and non-state actors shape agricultural policymaking across six countries in Asia and Africa. By integrating multiple theoretical perspectives—Policy Capacity Theory, Governance Theory, Evidence-Based Policymaking, and Systems Theory—the panel illuminates the complex dynamics of policy processes in real-world contexts. Furthermore, it bridges theory with practice by identifying critical gaps in public policy processes in the Global South and provides actionable recommendations to strengthen agricultural governance, enhance policy implementation, and build overall policy capacity in the region.

Keywords

Policy Capacity, Policy actors, Capacity determinates, Capacity parameters, system and subsystem of policy capacity.

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