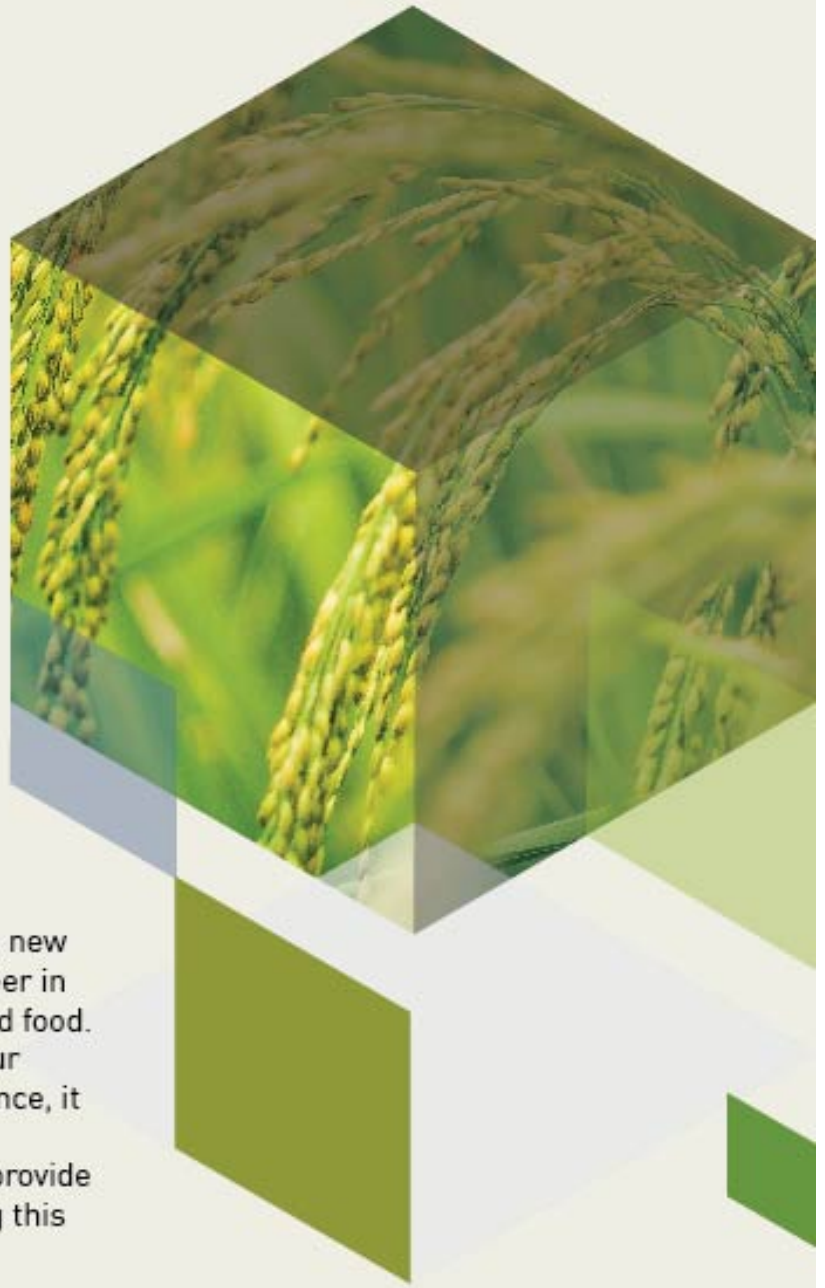


IMPACTS CONSEQUENCES AND RESPONSES TO COVID-19 IN BANGLADESH : A HUMAN SECURITY APPROACH



Background

COVID-19 is a global crisis bringing new challenges which we all need to steer in order to survive. To survive, we need food. And the source of that is through our agriculture sector and farmers. Hence, it is crucial to ensure the safety and survival of these farmers who can provide us the food security we need during this crisis.



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IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON
BANGLADESH'S AGRICULTURE
AND FOOD SECURITY

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IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON BANGLADESH'S AGRICULTURE AND FOOD SECURITY



Challenges

- For ensuring food security: we need proper food production, followed by fair distribution and accessibility, especially since 2.5 crore people that have recently fallen below the poverty line due to this pandemic and the subsequent loss of their purchasing power
- We have developed a lot when it comes to our agriculture sector; we produced in surplus but somehow, we have still not managed to ensure fair prices to our farmers
- The marketing system due to the lockdown and pandemic has been totally disrupted
- The pre-pandemic food supply chain is distorted due to issues like cost and barriers of transportation - additionally due to which farmers cannot sell their products and have suffered huge losses
- Due to social distancing, consumers choice decreased significantly. They are also suffering by having to pay higher prices for the products
- Purchasing power of daily labor workers, employees of the informal sector and low-income groups went down due to the lockdown - consumption at mass level reduced due to COVID-19 crisis
- Environmental vulnerability and degradation of soil health is persistent due to climate change
- Non-availability of safe and nutritious food for all
- Restricted agriculture labor movement to contain COVID-19 has caused labor crisis for 'Boro' harvest leading to higher labor cost
- Agricultural input (seed, fertilizer, pesticides) along with agricultural commodities export both are facing rigid barriers in terms of mobility
- Flower sector (12 crore taka market), nursery sectors (25,000) suffering huge losses
- Lack of data is causing issues to digitize market and agriculture sector



Recommendations

After the government's approach to the agriculture crisis during the first few months of this pandemic, some necessary steps taken did help to create some positive impacts like - 250 lac agricultural labor were shifted from the northern part to Haor areas and other parts of the country. Combined harvesters and other harvesting machines were brought for Boro Harvesting. Credit availability at low rate (4%) for farmers. In fact, for the first time in recent times almost 100% rice was harvested from the Haor areas during COVID-19. Some recommendations in line with the current budget are summarized below:

- In the new budget (2020-21) the agriculture sector has been given preferences in resource allocation, after the Ministry of Health. If we can properly utilize this, then we can overcome our challenges
- The credit support given to the poor and marginal farmers by the government needs assurance that it is received by them on time

IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON BANGLADESH'S AGRICULTURE AND FOOD SECURITY

- Rebuilding our market system is necessary or else both farmer and consumer will suffer
- Encourage the private sector to invest in agriculture market - through credit, tax or duty support - including digitization of the market system
- Duty and credit support should be given for agriculture storage facilities and transport capacities - since we don't have any dedicated transport for this
- Digitize the agriculture supply and market system to keep track of losses and gains
- Introducing cash incentive to farmers - since we are substituting import now due to COVID-19 for vegetables. So with the right incentives, these growth areas will flourish
- Extension of good agricultural practices to ensure safe and nutritious food for all
- Subsidize organic fertilizer instead of just the chemical ones - this will increase employment especially for females in rural area and it is better for the environment
- Ensuring efficient social safety net for farmers and their families

