



BANGLADESH FOOD SECURITY MONITORING QUARTERLY BULLETIN

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HIGHLIGHTS

Retail price of food: The national average retail price of rice decreased after *Aman* harvest which started in November and that of wholemeal wheat flour (*atta*) remained stable at 36 Tk/kg since June. Prices of lentils (*masur*) and oil (palm oil) began to increase prior to the month of Ramadan (July 2014). Although prices of oil have been decreasing since after Ramadan, prices of lentils are on an increasing trend.

The national average *retail price of coarse rice* was around 33-34 Tk/kg throughout the year. It decreased by 2 percent from November to December. Among the divisional *sadar* markets, prices were recorded highest in Barisal, Dhaka and Sylhet (34-35Tk/kg) and lowest in Chittagong, Khulna and Rajshahi divisions (30-31Tk/kg).

Inflation: General inflation dropped for the fifth consecutive month to 6.11 percent in December 2014 from 7.04 percent in July 2014. The drop has been on the back of a sharp reduction in food inflation while non-food inflation increased in the first half of FY 2014/15.

Food inflation dropped for the seventh consecutive month in December and stood at 5.86 percent. This is the first time since January 2013, that food inflation dropped below 6 percent. However non-food inflation (6.48 percent in December) increased throughout the reporting quarter and in December for the first time since March 2013 went higher than food inflation.

Remittances: Remittance growth was expected to recover during the current FY on the back of an upgrade in legal status of migrants in Gulf countries. Although remittance growth was 25 percent in the first quarter of FY 2014/15, it slumped to less than 1 percent in the reporting quarter.

Food production, import and stock: The FY 2014/15 target for food grain production is 34.86 million MT of rice and 1.33 million MT of wheat - a total of 36.19 million MT (*FPMU, FSR 98*), up by almost 2 percent from previous season's actual production. Public food grain stocks as of 1 January 2015 were 1.29 million MT which is 39 percent higher than a year ago. In the reporting quarter, 0.59 million MT of rice were imported by the private sector with no import by the Government.

Public food procurement and distribution: The FY 2014/15 budget allocated BDT 49.6 billion (USD 628 million) for grain procurement, which is 21 percent higher than last year. Cumulative distribution during the first half of FY 2014/15 was 0.7 million MT of which 58 percent was rice and 42 percent was wheat. The distributed amount is 66 percent of the amount distributed during the same period a year ago

Wage rate and purchasing capacity: In November, the average wage for a female labourer was only 223 Taka/day whereas for a male labourer it was 300 Taka/day – a difference of 77 Taka/day. This wage gap is highest in the eastern divisions of Chittagong and Sylhet where agricultural work is less concentrated and female labour is less in demand partly due to the conservative nature of the society, but also in Rangpur which is the poorest division.

In the first half of 2014, year-on-year rice purchasing capacity of male agricultural labourers was 7-15 percent less than in 2013. In July-August it rose to levels higher than a year ago and has remained at these levels.

ENVIRONMENTAL CONDITIONS

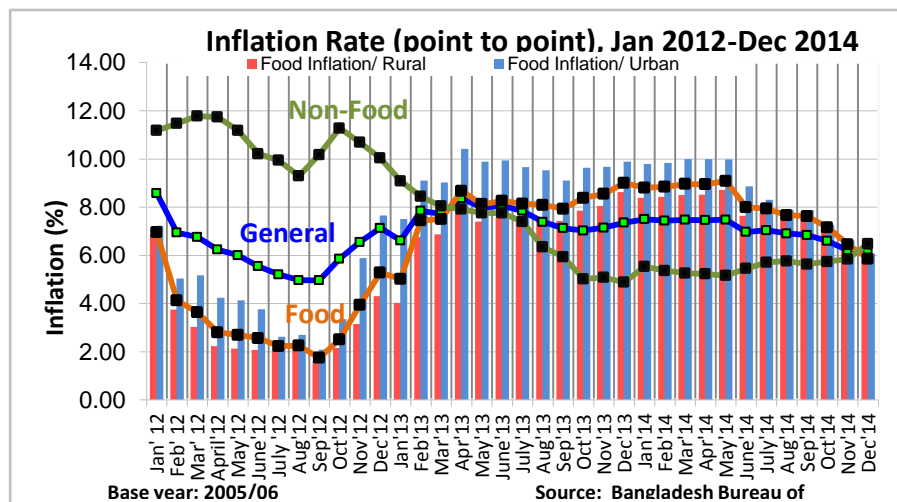
In the agricultural calendar there are two major winter crops –*Boro* paddy and wheat. *Boro* cultivation is mainly irrigation dependent and dry, cold weather is suitable for wheat cultivation. Their cultivation periods are December to mid-February and November to mid-January respectively; the weather during this period in 2014/15 is considered to have been favourable. The average temperature during November and December 2014 was close to the normal temperature during this period and was considered favourable for cultivation.

ECONOMIC CONDITIONS

INFLATION AND REMITTANCES

Food inflation continued to drop for the seventh consecutive month

General inflation, measured by the point to point variation in the Consumer Price Index (CPI), dropped for the fifth consecutive month to 6.11 percent in December 2014 from 7.04 percent in July 2014. The drop has been on the back of a sharp reduction in food inflation while non-food inflation increased in the first half of FY 2014/15.



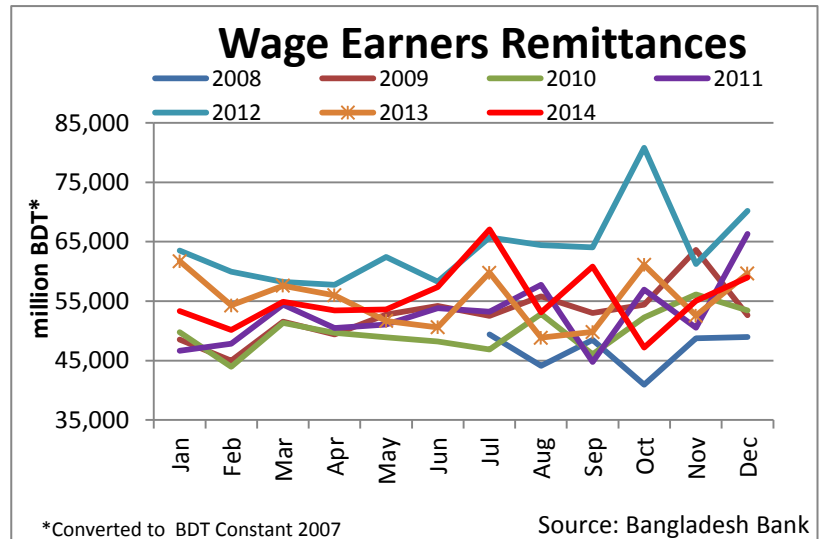
Food inflation dropped for the seventh consecutive month in December and stood at 5.86 percent. This is the first time since January 2013, that food inflation dropped below 6 percent. The year 2013 witnessed high food inflation which continued into 2014. Along with other economic and seasonality factors political unrest resulting in *hartal*/strikes and blockades, which intensified during the months of November and December 2013, is considered a major contributing factor to the rise in food prices in 2013. Post-election stability which favoured internal transport of production inputs and food commodities and favourable downward international prices of imported food items such as oil, sugar has contributed to the recent downward trend in food inflation.

However non-food inflation (6.48 percent in December) increased throughout the reporting quarter and in December for the first time since March 2013 went higher than food inflation. The rise in non-food inflation in October 2014 was expected due to higher spending during two major religious festivals. The media reported that reining in non-food inflation would figure high in the monetary policy of the central bank for the second half of the current fiscal year (*The Daily Star*, 09 January 2015).

Remittance inflow dropped in FY 2013/14 for the first time in a decade

The total remittance inflow (in USD) in October 2014 slumped by 24 percent from September before increasing by 16 percent and 8 percent in the next two consecutive months. The total remittance inflow during the October-December period is 13 percent lower than the total of the previous quarter. The high increase in remittance inflow in the months of July and September are attributed to sending money home for Eid expenditures (Eid-ul-Fitr in August and Eid-ul-Azha in October).

The total remittance inflow in FY 2013/14 (USD 14.23 billion) was 2 percent lower than in FY 2012/13, and it was the first time in 12 years that the remittance inflow dropped year-on-year. The main causes were political turmoil which disrupted and increased the costs of transactions, strengthened law enforcement in migrant countries against illegal workers, and the appreciation of the Taka against the USD. The cumulative migrant outflow in FY 2013/14 was 7 percent less year-on-year.



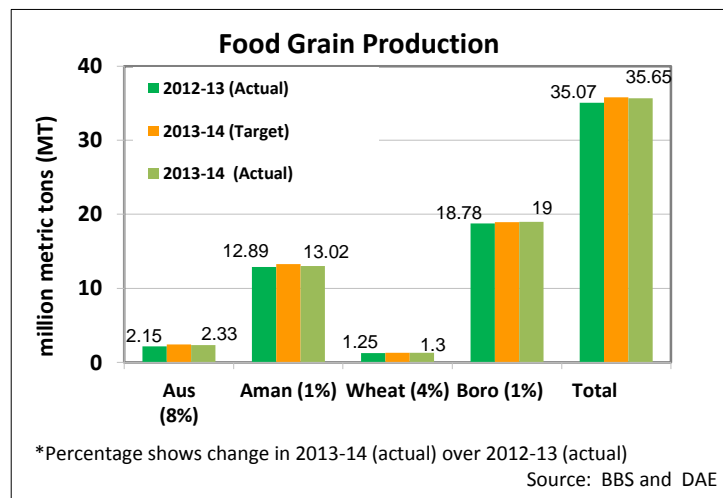
Remittance growth was expected to recover during the current FY on the back of upgrade in legal status of migrants in Gulf countries. Although remittance growth was 25 percent in the first quarter of FY 2014/15, it slumped to less than 1 percent in the reporting quarter.

FOOD AVAILABILITY

CROP PRODUCTION, FOOD GRAIN IMPORT AND PUBLIC GRAIN STOCK

Food grain production

- The FY 2014/15 target for food grain production is 34.86 million MT from rice and 1.33 million MT from wheat - a total of 36.19 million MT (FPMU, FSR 98), up by almost 2 percent from previous season's actual production. 55 percent of the rice production is expected from *Boro* season (cultivated December-February, harvested April-May).
- Domestic production of rice, supplemented with minimal imports, in the past few years have been sufficient to meet domestic demand.

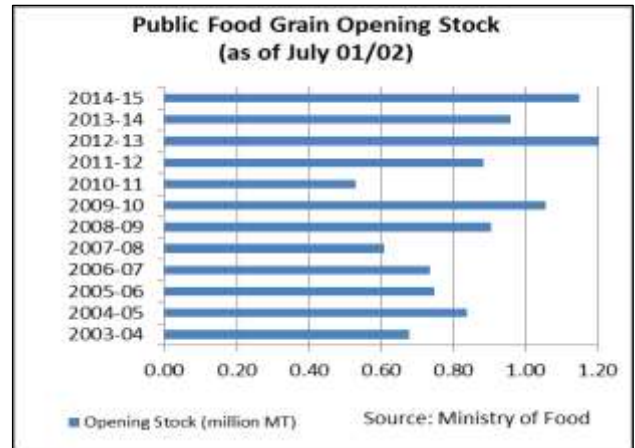


The Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE) estimated actual rice production in FY 2013/14 at 34.35 million MT against a target of 34.61 million MT.

Food grain stocks

- Public food grain stock as of 1 January 2015 was 1.29 million MT which is 39 percent higher than a year ago (Ministry of Food).

- The opening public stock of food grain for the FY 2014/15 was 1.15 million MT; it has increased by around 20 percent from FY 2013/14 but is still low compared to FY 2012/13. Relatively high amounts of public distribution and low procurement amounts of food grain during the second half of the FY 2012/13 had contributed to low end-of-FY stocks; this situation continued into FY 2013/14.



Food grain import and export

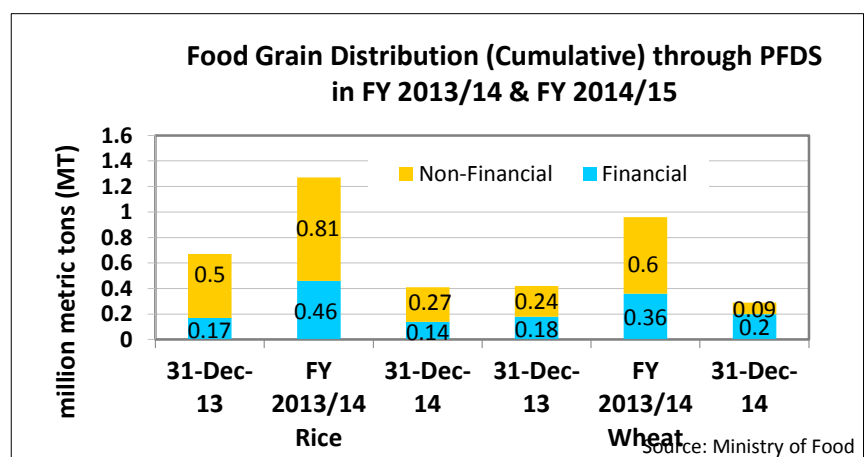
- In the first quarter of FY 2014/15, there was no import of rice by the public sector. In the second quarter, 0.59 million MT of rice was imported by the private sector. Import figures were 0.38 million MT for the same period in the previous year.
- Cumulative wheat import during the second half of the current FY was 1.6 million MT, around two and half times the import of rice and is 42 percent less than the wheat import during second half of the previous FY. Of the total import, 96 percent was by the private sector.
- Import of rice in the past three FYs has been minimal with the Government, which used to hold the larger share of the imports, decreasing its imports to nil last FY from 1.3 million MT in FY 2010/11. In contrast the Government's share in total wheat imports has remained stable since FY 2010/11 at around 20 to 30 percent.

Food grain procurement

- The FY 2014/15 budget allocated BDT 49.6 billion (USD 628 million) for grain procurement, which is 21 percent higher than last FY.
- The revised foodgrain procurement target in FY 2014/15 is set at 1.55 million MT (original 1.29 million MT) of which 1.40 million MT would be rice and 0.15 million MT wheat (FPMU, FSR 98). Actual rice and wheat procurements in FY 2013/14 were 1.29 million MT and 0.15 million MT respectively.
- Aman rice procurement started on 15 November 2014 and 189 thousand MT were collected as of 31 December 2014. Boro rice procurement, which was completed in October 2014, met its target of 1 million MT of rice at 31 Tk/kg and 0.15 million MT of paddy at 20 Tk/kg by 31 August.

Food grain distribution through PFDS

- Cumulative distribution during first half of FY 2014/15 was 0.7 million MT of which 58 percent was rice and 42 percent was wheat. The distributed amount is 66 percent of the amount distributed during the same period a year ago.
- The Government actually distributed a total of 2.23 million MT of food grain under PFDS in FY 2013/14 against a target of 2.56 million MT



(FPMU, FSR 95). The share of wheat in the food grain distribution increased significantly. In the FY 2013/14 around 45 percent of the total amount of food grain distributed through the PFDS was wheat compared to around 30 percent in the previous two FYs.

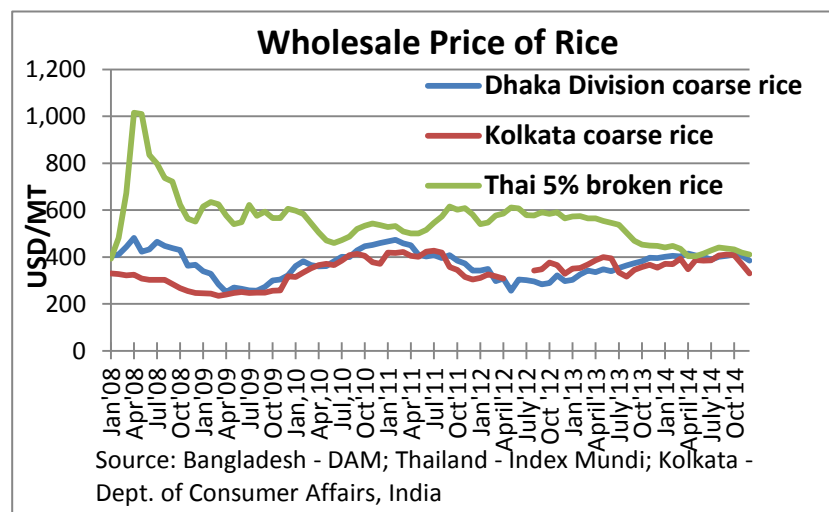
FOOD PRICE MONITORING

WHOLESALE AND RETAIL PRICES AND TERMS OF TRADE

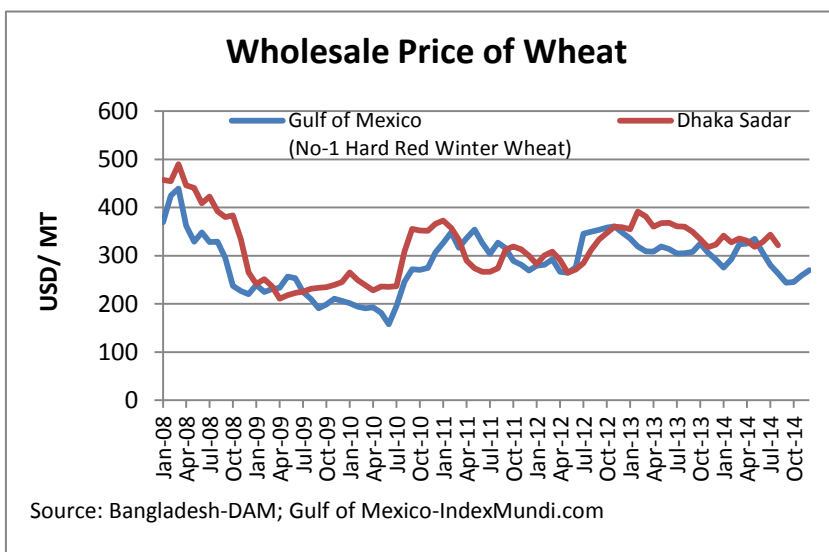
International wholesale prices of rice and wheat

International rice prices, as per FAO rice price index (which is based on 16 rice export quotations), increased throughout January to August 2014 before falling in the next four months and standing at 224 points in December which is similar to levels back in the beginning of the year. Sluggish import demands and abundant export supplies is said to have pushed down international rice price.

The wholesale rice price in Kolkata (India) and of Thai 5% broken rice both fell throughout the quarter, while that of Dhaka division coarse rice jumped to 411 USD/MT in October before falling to 384 USD/MT in December. Prices in Dhaka division, in Kolkata and in Thailand have converged more in 2014 with the Thai rice price decreasing due to the previous Thai Government's controversial rice pledging programme. In an effort to boost farmers' incomes, in 2011 the Government had started paying paddy farmers 15,000 baht (USD420) per ton - a 60 percent increase over 2010. With its higher price Thailand lost out to India (which took off a four year ban on the export of non-basmati rice) in 2012 as the world's largest rice exporter. One year after the start of the programme rice export prices for Thailand were on a decreasing trend as it tried to sell its huge stockpile of rice as a result of the intervention.



Bangladesh is a net importer of wheat and international prices heavily influence the price in the domestic market. After increasing steadily from February to May 2014 over growing speculation on effects of unfavourable weather in parts of the American continent, the average wholesale price of wheat in the Gulf of Mexico fell significantly in the following four months. With improved production prospects, it dropped by 27 percent from May to September (335 USD/MT in May to 244 USD/MT in September). However it has increased



throughout October-December period and stood at 270 USD/MT in December.

In Dhaka sadar market the wholesale price was 322 USD/MT in August - a difference of 59 USD/MT with the price in the Gulf of Mexico. Prices for September to December were not directly available from the Department of Agricultural Marketing website, however reports by FPMU suggest prices increased during this period (FPMU, *Fortnightly Foodgrain Outlook 166*).

Retail prices for essential food commodities

The national average retail price of rice decreased after *Aman* harvest started in November and that of wholemeal wheat flour (*atta*) remained stable at 36 Tk/kg since June. Prices of lentils (*masur*) and oil (palm oil) began to increase prior to the month of Ramadan (July 2014). Although the price of oil has been decreasing since after Ramadan, prices of lentils are on an increasing trend.

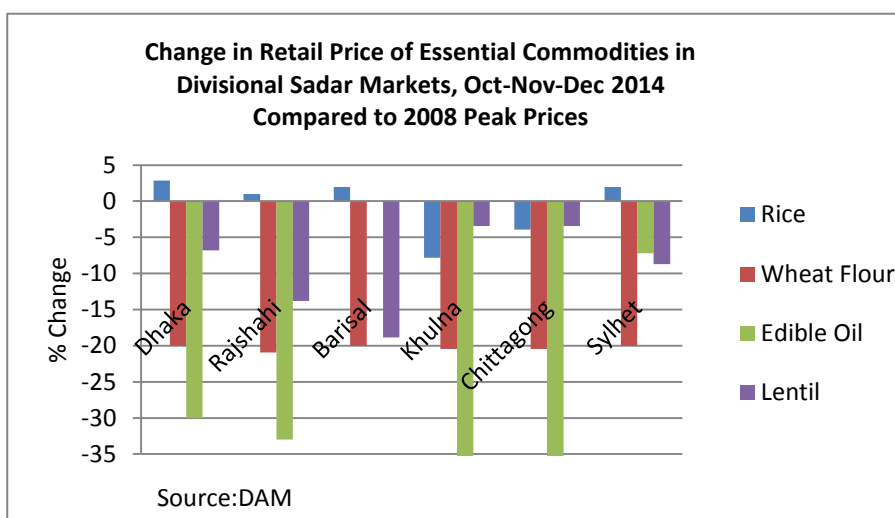
The national average retail price of coarse rice was around 33-34 Tk/kg throughout the year. It decreased by 2 percent from November to December. Among the divisional *sadar* markets, prices were recorded highest in Barisal, Dhaka and Sylhet divisions (34-35 Tk/kg) and lowest in Chittagong, Khulna and Rajshahi divisions (30-31 Tk/kg).

The average retail price of wholemeal wheat flour (*atta*) in the current quarter decreased slightly from the previous quarter and is on a decreasing trend. Prices were around 34-36 Tk/kg in the divisional *sadar* markets except in Sylhet *sadar*. The price in Sylhet *sadar*, which was exceptionally high in the quarter of April-June (39 Tk/kg) compared to other divisions (36 Tk/kg), came down to 35 Tk/kg in October but increased again to 37 Tk/kg in December.

Retail prices of essential food commodities (Tk/kg);					
Dhaka Sadar Market					
	Sep'14	Oct'14	Nov'14	Dec'14	Peak 2008
Coarse Rice	36	37	36	35	35
Whole wheat flour	36	36	36	36	45
Palm Oil	71	71	70	69	100
Lentil (masur)	85	86	87	87	92

Source: Department of Agricultural Marketing

% Change of Retail Prices (National Average) of Oct-Dec'14 compared to-			
Commodities	Last Quarter July-Sep'14	Last Year Oct-Dec'13	2008 (high food price peak periods)
Coarse Rice	0.6	3.5	1.1
Wheat Flour (atta)	-0.1	0.6	-17.9
Palm Oil	-9.2	-8.3	-26.3
Lentil (masur)	2.3	3.5	-5.2

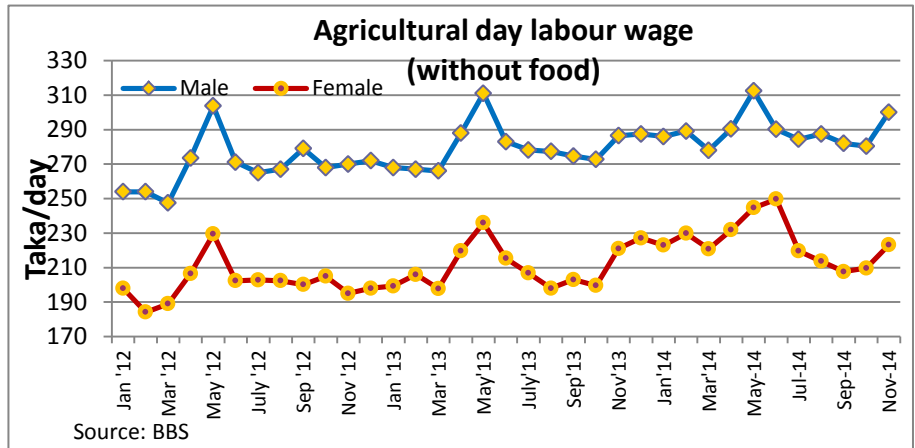


Palm oil is the dominating edible oil in the country, accounting for around 64 percent of the market share among the three major edible oils (the other two are soybean oil and mustard oil). 90 percent of the edible oil requirement is imported. Despite static oil prices in the international market, prices in Bangladesh kept rising in the months nearing Ramadan, however began to decrease afterwards and stood at 71 Tk/litre in December, down from 80 Tk/litre in August.

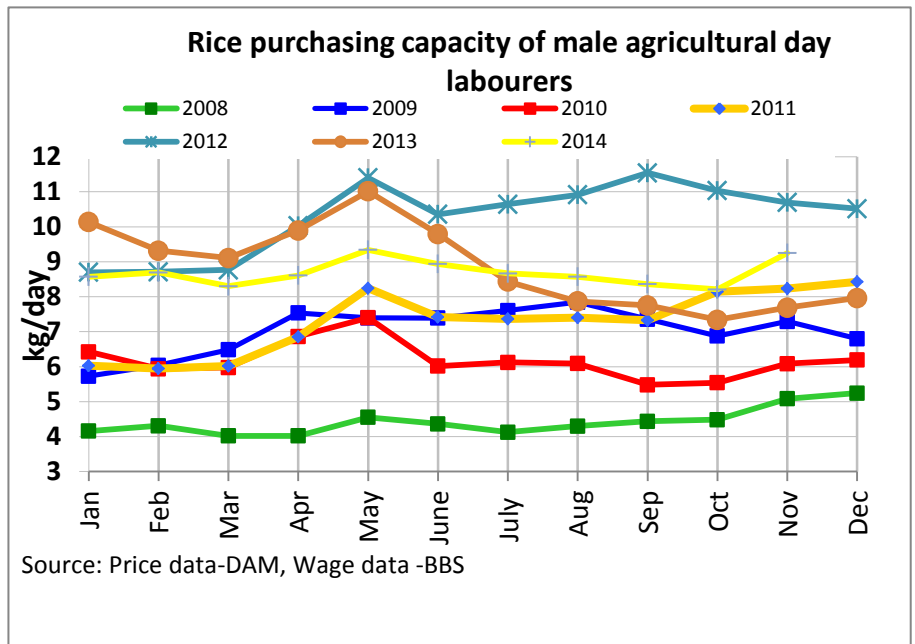
The average retail price of lentils (*masur*) increased by 9 percent from April (79 Tk/kg) to December (86 Tk/kg). There was little price differential in the divisional averages.

Terms of Trade/Food purchasing capacity of agricultural day labourers

Year-on-year average agricultural daily wages for male labourers in the months of 2014 (latest available wage data from BBS is November 2014) have increased by 3-8 percent. The average rate of growth was 15 percent in 2012. Compared to that it was only 5 percent in 2013 – a year marred by political turmoil which reduced the migration of labourers during agricultural peak seasons.



There continues to be a significant difference between the agricultural daily wages for male and female labourers. In November, the average wage for a female labourer was only 223 Taka/day whereas for a male labourer it was 300 Taka/day – a difference of 77 Taka/day. This wage gap is highest in the eastern divisions of Chittagong and Sylhet where agricultural work is less concentrated and female labour is less in demand partly due to the conservative nature of the society, but also in Rangpur division which is the poorest division. In contrast, the lowest wage gap is in neighbouring Rajshahi division. BBS from 2014 has started reporting wage data by district which has made it possible to report separately for Rangpur division, which used to be part of former Rajshahi division. This stark contrast in the wage gap in these neighbouring divisions requires further examination.



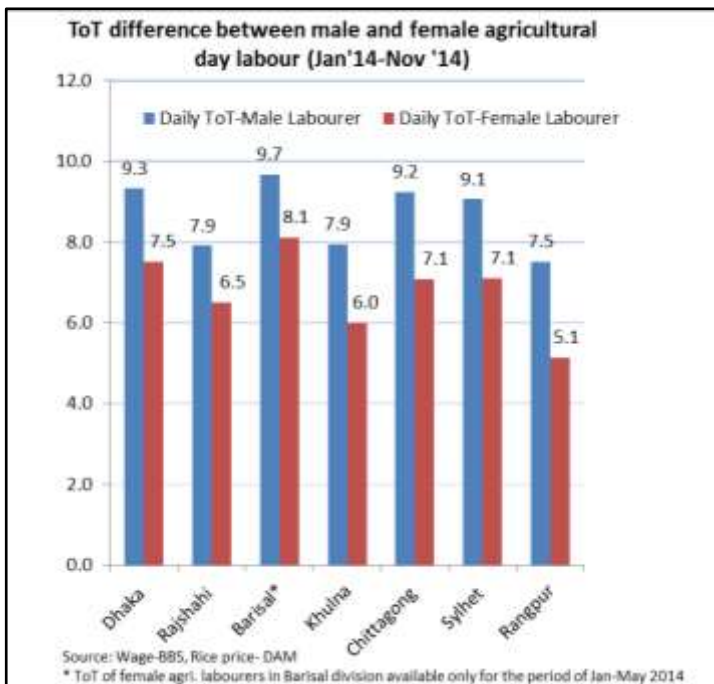
The Food Security and Nutrition Surveillance Project (FSNSP) also reported in its 2013 Annual Report that the proportion of women among its surveyed population who earned income was lowest in Chittagong and Sylhet divisions and highest in the Rajshahi, Rangpur and Khulna divisions. Moreover the increase in the proportion of women earning income was also highest in the Northwest divisions. Viewing these trends for 2014 is warranted.

After the *Aman* harvesting period ends, there are far less work opportunities for female agricultural labourers than for their male counterparts. Agricultural activities such as *Boro* transplanting (December-February) are predominantly practiced by male labourers. And thus the wage gap is also highest during *Boro* season.

The Terms of Trade (ToT) of agricultural day labourers is an indicator of the quantity of essential food items that an agricultural day labourer can buy with his/her daily income. Since rice is the staple food and constitutes the major share in household food expenditure, rice purchasing capacity is an important indicator of the ToT.

In the first half of 2014, year-on-year ToT were 7-15 percent less than in 2013. In July-August it rose to levels higher than a year ago.

Differences in rice prices weigh little on the monthly ToT. The significant difference in the monthly ToT is due to regional differences in wage rates and work opportunities. Wage rates are usually lowest in northwest divisions of Rajshahi and Rangpur and southwest division of Khulna resulting in lowest ToT in these divisions.



The difference in wage between male and female agricultural day labourers is reflected in the ToT. In the past three years, the average wage gap between male and female labourers has been around 20-25 percent resulting in purchasing capacity difference of 2 kg of rice per day. This has had significant implications on the food security status of households dependent largely on the income of female members. Interestingly except for Rangpur, the wage gap is lowest in the divisions with lowest ToT and highest in the divisions with highest ToT.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
1. Aus Rice			Planting	Planting	Planting		Harvesting	Harvesting				
2. Aman Rice	Harvesting				Planting	Planting	Planting	Planting			Harvesting	Harvesting
3. Wheat	Planting		Harvesting	Harvesting							Planting	Planting
4. Boro Rice	Planting	Planting		Harvesting	Harvesting							Planting

RESPONSE TO SHOCKS FACED BY HOUSEHOLDS

FOOD INSECURITY IN FLOOD AFFECTED AREAS IN THE NORTHWEST

Phase 1 assessment: From mid-August heavy rains in the main river basins and upstream catchments of India, along with continuous rainfall in northwest and north-eastern Bangladesh triggered floods in nine of sixty-four districts, causing widespread damage to houses, infrastructure and agriculture. Almost 2 million people were affected in the initial stage of the most affected districts of the north-west region which is 33 percent of the total population in the affected area. Immediate impact on food security included loss of household food stocks and damaged rice. The most impacted livelihood groups appeared to be small and marginal farmers, and day labourers (agricultural and non-agricultural). Following the release of the Joint Needs Assessment (JNA), a coordinated emergency response plan was implemented by UN agencies and I/NGOs in support of the Government of Bangladesh's relief operations. In addition to the 4,650 MT food and over BDT 10 million of assistance provided by the Government, responding agencies reached approximately 75 thousand households with emergency cash and food assistance.

WFP supported around 106,450 persons living in 21,290 households by providing fortified biscuits as immediate relief while people were stranded on higher ground.

Rapid market assessment: Following the findings of the Phase 1 JNA, a rapid market assessment was conducted by the Food Security Cluster (FSC) in Kurigram, Gaibandha, Jamalpur, Bogra and Sirajganj districts to assess market functionality in order to define the response modality. Based on the findings, unconditional cash-only response was found to be the most appropriate transfer modality. WFP provided unconditional cash transfers via mobile phone banking to 19,463 flood affected households in 41 unions of 13 upazilas in Kurigram, Gaibandha, Jamalpur, and Sirajganj. Each household received Tk 9,000 (US\$ 116) in three rounds. The aim was to complete the three rounds of transfers by November after which employment opportunities in *Aman* harvest and *Boro* planting would be available.

Phase 3 assessment: By November 2014 there was a growing concern among FSC members that the overall response was insufficient in meeting the recovery needs required to support employment, restoration of livelihoods, local infrastructure development etc. A Phase 3 assessment was conducted in 30 unions of 10 upazilas in the 5 districts through a survey of 360 households, 60 focus group discussions and 10 key informant interviews. In addition a telephone survey of officials from 52 unions was conducted via the Union Parishad Helpline.

The main findings were:

- Within the five surveyed districts, it is estimated that 53,086 households (HHs) living in extreme poverty are in need of assistance and have received no form of non-government support. Further assistance should aim to address this gap.
- The most vulnerable HHs are in Kurigram where 39 percent of the HHs surveyed have poor Food Consumption Scores and 42 percent are within a critical-borderline range. HHs in Bogra performed best in terms of food consumption however the results are still concerning with over 50 percent of respondents unable to afford an adequate nutritional intake. The effect of these floods on the most vulnerable HHs remains critical.
- The flood caused widespread damage to croplands and destroyed much of the region's *Aman* harvest. Government estimated over 86,000 ha of crop land and seed bed were damaged across the five districts. Almost 80 percent of HHs whose main livelihood is agriculture predicted their upcoming *Aman* harvest to be 50 percent below average.
- Both agri-employment opportunities and wages fell with the decline in agricultural production. Agricultural day wages dropped by 13 percent on average while non-agri labour markets were saturated leaving many unable to find enough work. Focus group discussion findings revealed that less than half of the respondents were able to access more than 2.5 days of work a week.
- While market price variations normalised after the flood water receded, declining wages and lack of access to employment means the average monthly income is between Tk 180 (Bogra) and Tk 760 (Kurigram) below average monthly food expenditure.
- The effects of food insecurity are likely to be acutely felt by displaced people. The Union Parishad survey revealed that approximately 114,000 people had no permanent shelter opportunities. This includes 32,000 people in Kurigram alone.
- Among HHs that have sustained damage, over half reported that materials and tools are the main limiting factor while a lack of skilled labour is also impeding the reconstruction effort. Estimated reconstruction costs vary widely with 25 percent between Tk 5,000 and 10,000, and 50 percent between Tk 20,000 and 40,000. Responding HHs were able to provide cash, labour or salvaged materials in differing quantities.

The full report is available in the following link <http://foodsecuritycluster.net/document/food-security-nutrition-shelter-and-early-recovery-assessment-flood-affected-areas-north>.

OUTLOOK

IMPACT OF INTERNATIONAL OIL PRICE DECLINE ON FOOD INFLATION

International crude oil prices came down to USD 100 per barrel in September 2014 and to USD 60 per barrel in December. Bangladesh is a net importer of petroleum products (crude oil and other petroleum based products) and imports all its crude oil requirement. The Government agency, Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation (BPC), imports and distributes petroleum products. In FY 2013/14 Bangladesh imported 5.4 million tonnes of petroleum products worth Tk 366 billion of which 65 percent was spent on diesel import (*BPC website*).

Import of oil is subsidized by the Government. In FY 2013/14 it spent Tk 73.5 billion on petroleum subsidies. The BPC has been incurring losses consecutively since FY 1999/2000. According to its Statement of Profit/Loss it had a loss of Tk 24.8 billion in FY 2013/14 which is less than half of the 46 percent loss in FY 2012/13.

Bangladesh is a net importer of many essential food items such as wheat, edible oil, lentils. The decline in the oil price is expected to push international food prices down and benefit imports of food commodities. The Food Price Index (consisting of average food price indices of five commodity groups - cereal, dairy, oil, sugar and meat) reported by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) declined to 188.6 points in December from 213 points in March 2014 which was the highest since May 2013. The decline was mainly on the back of a reduction in cereal, dairy and vegetable oil prices. Apart from a decrease in oil prices translating into lower transport cost of food commodities and lower cost of food processing and production, there are other ways an oil price slump affects the value of food commodities. For example, the recent slump in crude oil prices depressed demand for palm oil as a biodiesel feedstock, causing international palm oil values to weaken, and it reduced the volume of sugar crops being converted into ethanol, which weighed on international sugar quotations in December (*FAO, Food Price Index report Dec 2014*).

Thus the oil price decrease is expected to contribute to a decline in food inflation and in turn general inflation. Food inflation constitutes 56 percent of the weight in general inflation with the weight being 61 percent in rural inflation and 47 percent in urban inflation. Food inflation has already decreased to 5.85 percent in December 2014 from 7.94 percent in July which is partially due to low import costs and partially to reducing political instability which had negative effects on the food supply chain during the previous year.

However rice weighs 80 percent in the food inflation. Domestic production of rice almost fulfils the national rice requirement and there has even been minimal rice export in recent years, mostly through private channels. Rice from *Boro* season constitutes 55 percent of the total rice production and cultivation is heavily irrigation dependent. Diesel is heavily used in the agricultural sector for irrigation purpose. 33 percent of the total sale of hi speed diesel is in the agriculture sector.

Whether or not the cost of production of paddy will decrease due to the international oil price decline depends on whether the Government will decrease the oil price at the domestic level. Both diesel and kerosene are being sold at Tk 68 per litre, while petrol and octane at Tk 96 per litre and Tk 99 per litre respectively since January 2013. At present the Government may attempt to use all the gains from the oil price decline to improve its Balance of Payments, however there is mounting pressure from consumer groups and producers to decrease the domestic price of oil.

Any translation of a reduction in cost of paddy production to retail prices of rice will also depend on domestic transportation of rice which could be negatively affected (like in 2013) due to strikes and blockades. In 2013 a year which saw 75.5 days of hartals and blockades, despite good production both

wholesale and retail prices of rice were 15 percent higher than in 2012 and there could be similar effects in 2015.

Reference:

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The previous BFSM bulletins are available on the internet at the following URL address: <http://www.wfp.org/content/bangladesh-food-security-monitoring-system-2014>

The bulletins can be received by e-mail subscription upon request.

For suggestions or queries, please contact Kayenat Kabir, Senior Programme Officer, VAM Unit, WFP Bangladesh at kayenat.kabir@wfp.org

