

The Daily Star

Thursday, May 28, 2009

Tk 181cr EU grant for ultra-poor

Unb, Dhaka

Marginal and landless farmers in Bangladesh are going to get a productivity boost soon under innovative projects of the UN World Food Programme (WFP) funded with a 20-million-euro donation worth Tk 181 crore from the European Union.

With this assistance, WFP Bangladesh through its High Food Price Emergency Operation will assist 40,000 ultra-poor people, including landless farmers affected by volatile food prices, to improve livelihood and ensure food security, an announcement said here yesterday.

The programme through different schemes aims at helping poor farmers to produce food more efficiently.

It will also improve the capacity of ultra-poor agricultural workers or wage labourers in entrepreneurship, developing their skills in small-scale agro-based activities, group farming, food processing, diversified crop production, poultry or cow rearing and other income-generating activities.

“Through this EU grant we hope WFP will generate employment opportunities and boost agricultural productivity and give marginal and landless farmers or agricultural labourers access to employment opportunities and sufficient food,” said Dr Jean Jacques Lauture, acting head of cooperation of the European Commission Delegation to Bangladesh.

The programme will transfer income mainly in the form of cash to highly food-insecure and disaster-prone areas.

The programme interventions include creation of employment opportunities, training and asset grants.

Different schemes are expected to enhance flood resilience and improve agricultural infrastructure.

“While the price of rice has come down, millions of Bangladeshis are yet to recover from the higher levels of debt and increase in malnutrition which the crisis provoked,” said John Aylieff, representative of WFP Bangladesh.

“Moreover, price volatility could continue, particularly as the global economic crisis set in. This important new partnership between the EU and WFP will help marginal or landless farmers weather the storm of price volatility, by promoting agricultural production and broadening their livelihood opportunities,” said the representative of the UN food agency.

Eleven more food-insecure districts -- Bhola, Bagerhat, Barguna, Patuakhali, Jhalakati, Pirojpur, Rajshahi, Naogaon, Nawabganj, Narail and Bandarban -- will be covered by the programme.

Each project participant will receive a daily wage of Tk 150 per working day for participating in employment-generation activities.

Families with pregnant and lactating mothers and malnourished children will receive micronutrient sachets.