



**Report of  
the National Workshop  
on  
“Food Security in Bangladesh”**

**19-20 October 2005  
IDB Bhaban, Agargaon, Dhaka, Bangladesh**

**Ministry of Food and Disaster Management, Government of Bangladesh  
World Food Programme-Bangladesh**



## 1.0 Introduction

A **National Workshop on Food Security in Bangladesh** was held on 19-20 October 2005 at IDB Bhaban, Agargaon, Dhaka to take stock of the food security situation in Bangladesh and draw future plan of actions. The Ministry of Food and Disaster Management (MOFDM) organized the workshop in collaboration with the United Nations World Food Programme. The workshop was designed to bring a wider group of participants from the Government, Donors, NGOs and Civil Societies.

The challenge of food security in Bangladesh is huge. There are about 60 million people who go hungry every day and about 25 million of these are chronically malnourished, suffering from silent disaster; and unable to consume 1805 Kcal of food. Such a large-scale hunger and malnutrition results in suffering, disease and the consequent GDP losses. According to the joint GoB and United Nations' Country Team Report on Bangladesh's Progress Towards the MDGs, indicated that the country has made notable progress in reducing income, hunger and poverty. However, achieving the MDGs within the next decade will require Bangladesh to develop and implement more concerted efforts and effective strategies.

The Government of Bangladesh and the various development partners have of late made some desired efforts to improve the Food Security Policy environment. Earlier in 2000, a Task Force on Comprehensive Food Security was set up which came up with a strategy paper for future food security policy of the GoB. A national workshop was proposed to take stock of the progress since the recommendations of that Task Force.

The two day long Workshop was divided into four sessions including the inaugural session. The programme as well as the list of participants of the workshop is given in the **Annex-1 & 2**.

## 2.0 Inaugural session

Mr Chowdhury Kamal Ibne Yusuf, Honourable Minister for the Ministry of Food and Disaster Management, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, as Chief Guest, inaugurated the session.

Mr. Muhammad Fazlur Rahman, Secretary-in-Charge, Ministry of Food and Disaster Management presided over the inaugural session. The inaugural session commenced with recitation from the Holy Quran followed by address of welcome by Mr Sk. A. K. Motahar Hossain, Director General, Food Planning and Monitoring Unit (FPMU). Ms. Usha Mishra Joshi, Senior Advisor, WFP presented the keynote paper on '**Current Food Security and Challenges**', jointly prepared by WFP and FPMU. On behalf of WFP, Mr. Edward Matthew Kallon, Country Director a.i. delivered his speech highlighting the strategies and WFP's programmes towards meeting the food security challenges in Bangladesh.



Mr Chowdhury Kamal Ibne Yusuf, Honourable Minister for Ministry of Food and Disaster Management, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh emphasised that food is the basic human need, which has the highest priority among the daily necessities. According to the Article-15 (a) of the constitution of Bangladesh, it is the fundamental responsibility of the State to secure its citizens to the provision of basic necessities of food. Ensuring food security for all is one of the major challenges that Bangladesh faces today. Despite significant achievements in food grain production and availability, food security at national, household and individual level still remains a matter of major concern for the Government.

He told that the prime goal of MDG was to 'eradicating extreme poverty and hunger', more specifically, to reduce the proportion of hungry people to half by 2015. The food security situation has to improve dramatically, all over the globe, to achieve the hunger goal. The major food security problem in Bangladesh is that about 60 million of people are currently remaining below the established food based poverty line, out of which 25 millions are living in extreme poverty, who are also severely undernourished, despite the impressive increases in food grain availability. This means that our success in making staple food availability coexists with very high prevalence of under-nourishment and malnutrition (**The text of his speech is appended as annex-3**).

The keynote paper on **Current Food Security and Challenges** presented by Ms. Usha Mishra Joshi, Senior Adviser, WFP provided an overview of the national food security situation and identified key issues, challenges and areas of interventions through policy and planning. It mentioned that Food security situation in Bangladesh had improved considerably, especially on the availability side. Further sustainable improvements on access and utilisation needed renewed large-scale efforts from the government, civil society and the development partners. Hunger of 60 million people of the country was primarily due to income poverty. There were approximately 27 food security and social safety net programmes in the country but the coverage of these programmes was still not sufficient to reach all the needy people.

It suggested that substantial improvements for bringing diversity in the Bangladesh diet would require greater diversification of agricultural production. Rice yields must be improved for releasing areas for expansion of non-rice crop areas while maintaining adequate rice production. Similarly, storage facility should be improved to reduce the risk to perishable products like fruits and vegetables.

Terming food security as a multi dimensional, multi-sectoral, multi-ministerial issue, the paper emphasized the need to develop an integrated policy and action plan, bringing together all the diverse players and stakeholders as well as making them accountable for contributing their effort to the overall challenge of improving Food Security. Faced with the challenges of an increasing population, natural subsidence, decreasing availability of agricultural land and increasing food prices, the paper endorsed increasing productivity as one of the important options before Bangladesh. Diversification of the food basket may be possible through attaining minimum self-sufficiency in the non-cereal crops it added.



### 3.0 Working session- One

Mr. Syed Ataur Rahman, Additional Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture chaired the first working session. Four papers were presented in this session.

**3.1.** The first paper of this session was on "Food Security Situation in Bangladesh: Food Availability" presented by Mr. M. M. Rahman of FAO. It highlighted supply-side constraints of other non-food crops like fisheries & livestock besides food crops. The paper stated that the country had done very well in rice production. Rice production had doubled the calorie availability in span of thirty years. Trends of population growth, agricultural commodity versus climate changes and other challenges that might have impact on the future self-sufficiency food grains have to be reviewed.

The paper suggested that there was a need for increasing agricultural research and development expenditure as percentage of GDP. Right now, the agricultural research and development expenditure as percentage of GDP stood around 0.4% only against recommendation of FAO and World Bank of 2%. So there was room for strengthening and improving the sector through research. In fact, lots of problems could be solved through research and development activities.

After the presentation, Syed Ataur Rahman, Additional Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture, the designated discussant made his comments. He told that while focusing on the availability of food the authors had thoroughly examined the national requirements of food and indicated the ways to fulfil that requirement in the long run. In a relatively long-term context, food self-sufficiency status of Bangladesh would be determined by a number of interrelated variables e.g. growth of population and income and change in food consumption pattern. Profitability and comparative advantage in production of crop and non-crop food items would also be important determinants of production expansion. Thus the authors gave a broad picture of the food availability situation.

**3.2.** The second paper of the session titled "Food Security and Access to Food" was presented by Mr. Ruhul Amin of FPMU. It stated that despite the growth in food production and its availability, food insecurity was still then a major problem mainly because of the lack of purchasing power of the poor and thus of access to food especially by ultra poor. Income level of the poor might not be sufficient to purchase the necessary foods at prevailing market prices. He mentioned that average Bangladesh diet was deficit in energy, and it was seriously unbalanced with an inadequate intake of fat, oil, fish/animal protein, fruit and vegetable.

Mr. Wajed Ali Khan, Joint Secretary (Disaster Management), MOFDM, Ms. Yolande Wright, Environment and Livelihoods Adviser, DFID and Sk. Rokibul Alam, Commodity Manager, SHOUHARDO, CARE were the designated discussants of the paper. They told that ensuring access to food and food security as a whole was not the business of Ministry of Food and Disaster Management alone. It has been a multi-sectoral job. Holistic approach is needed to address the problem. Good governance also should play a major role for ensuring access to food.

**3.3.** The third paper of the session titled "Food Security Situation in Bangladesh: Utilization, Nutrition and Food Safety" presented by Dr. Asirul Hoque of National Nutrition Project. Dr. Asirul Hoque highlighted that since independence, Bangladesh had made significant progress in improving the health services to its ever-growing population. In spite of this progress, malnutrition



was still an important issue for public health problem in the country. Issues of food safety were also discussed in this paper.

3.4 The last paper of session one "Setting a Standard Cereal Intake for Balanced Nutrition in Bangladesh" jointly presented by Dr. H K M Yusuf, Professor of Dhaka University and Mr. Md. Asadul Islam of BIDS discussed on how to set a standards and quality of cereals to be consumed by the people and the adequate quantity of all other food items. This was needed to get balanced nutrition in terms of energy, protein and the micronutrients. The per capita calorie intake trend and its pattern were to be judged by the relative importance of some socio-economic and demographic factors that affect the dietary intake. This paper showed that data from INFS and BBS varied widely from one another and that this had been a challenge for people who were interested to make future projections for assessing the position of the country in terms of food availability.

Mr. Zahid Hossain, Director General, Directorate of Food, the designated discussants of the paper mentioned that people were not purchasing adequate fruits and vegetables for a balanced diet. The country should increase the production of fruits and vegetables. He also emphasized that GoB should allocate more resources for production of potato, fruits and vegetables. Government have to ensure the supply and access of food.

3.5 In the open floor discussion there were some startling revelations. It was noted that people have become more conscious today of what they are eating from the market. But the challenge for us was to recognize that the standard has to be streamlined and the recommendations have to be strengthened and put in practice. There was also some debate around how we estimate the food gap, estimation of population increase, calorie intake etc. Inconsistency of data was identified as a major problem.

There were wide-ranging discussions about nutritional challenges. One of them was the need for evolving nutritional standards. These standards need not only be based on scientific calorie based standard but it also needed to be translated into local menu. The vulnerable people should attain the standard in an economic fashion so that the WHO recommended menu be customised to the social and economic context of Bangladesh. This was one of the important recommendations of the workshop.

Ms. Rukhsana Hashin, Sr. Assistant Secretary, LGD told that there should be a national council to ensure food security and that for food safety. Mr. Manjur Ahmed, Advisor, FBCCI told that we have to plan for food security and availability both for normal and disaster period. For food sourcing, we have to produce more food and have indigenous food sourcing and that there should be proper distribution and use of land. He also emphasised on the use of bio-technology.

Mr. C R Lovendal, FAO told that the three issues of food security: physical access, social access, economic access yet to have very substantial impact. Social access normally was considered as social welfare. Economic access should be considered in terms of purchasing capacity. PRSP and hunger reduction must be interlinked with food security.



#### 4.0 Working session- Two

Mr Syed Ataur Rahman, Additional Secretary, and Ministry of Agriculture chaired the second working session. Three papers were presented in the session.

4.1 The first paper of the session -2 titled " Regional Food Security Experience: Lessons Learnt from India and Timor Leste " presented by Mr. Balparitosh Dash, WFP, India, highlighted that there was a need for sharing of some good regional experiences. Indian experience was very similar to Bangladesh as far as availability successes were concerned. India was sitting on huge stocks of food he added. In spite of being a food surplus nation, there were over 200 million people who were food insecure and malnourished in India. There were similar food aid programmes in India and Bangladesh.

The Food for Works Programme in India was not so well targeted and the benefit was not reaching to the ultra poor people. It was going to relatively better off people. In his opinion the reasons were very obvious and they were related with governance and accountability issues. The ultra poor people did not have easy access although the programmes were meant for them.

4.2 The second paper in session -2 titled " Challenges in Addressing Hunger and Poverty in Bangladesh: The Case for a Twin Track Approach " was presented by Mr. C. R. Lovendal, FAO, Rome. He described the cost of hunger and concluded that the cost of dealing with hunger was much less than dealing with the consequences of hunger and malnutrition, loss of days etc. He looked very closely into the multiplier effect of agriculture and indicated that agriculture has backward and forward linkages. Agriculture was not only a supply issue. It was an issue of pro-poor economic growth as well. People had to recognize the interconnectedness between the pro-poor economic growth and access aspects and the implications of agricultural expansion and the importance of diversifying agricultural products.

Dr. Sajjad Zohir, Senior Research Fellow from BIDS, one of the designated discussants, expressed his appreciation and raised some issues for further considerations. He inquired about what lessons could we draw from the Indian experience- citing that India had such a huge surplus of food and at the same time it had a huge malnourished population. The paper did not answer to this question he opined. Quoting the issue that the very poor were left out from the food assisted programmes, he asked whether there was anything inherent in the safety net programme that did not allow them to avail the services provided under those programmes. He was not sure what lessons could be learned from the East Timor experiences. To what extent the government and NGOs had provided support was not clear from the paper. He mentioned, however, that disaster was an important issue that needed to be addressed while discussing food security.

The paper presented by Christian emphasized on twin strategies for food security Dr. Zohir mentioned. He said that on the supply side we had to ensure adequate food and on the other hand we had to have safety net programmes. With the growth of agriculture the poor should benefit. In the 1990s, the increase of rice production benefited largely the poor. Excessive use of pesticide, multiple use of land, HYV were very much in practice during this decade. This was not a pro-poor approach he mentioned. In order to make meaningful use of the result from this kind of modelling exercise one needs to update the input and the SAM matrices he added.



Mr Farid Hasan from Oxfam, another designated discussant, told that food insecurity did not exist only in India but also exists in Bangladesh. Land ownership and proper utilization of land were also missing. Distribution process and policy (short and long term) were not favourable for the poor. This might jeopardise the livelihood of small farmers.

4.3 The third Presentation of the session -2 titled “MDG, PRSP and Draft National Food Policy (2005) of Bangladesh” was presented by Mr. Sushen Chandra Das, Research Director & Mr. Naser Farid, Asstt. Chief, FPMU. The paper highlighted the issues of food policy in the context of various dimension of food security. It discussed the content and coverage of food policy under preparation by the Ministry of Food and Disaster Management.

Dr Mujibur Rahman, Senior Economist & Member, Bangladesh Rice Foundation, the designated discussant, told that the self-sufficiency in rice availability was definitely good news. He however, showed his concern over the issue of unbalanced use of fertilizer and soil fertility and arsenic contamination. He told that inadequacy of research funding and continuity of research in agriculture is a great concern. The research will be needed for production of crops, fruits and vegetables for diet diversity.

## **5.0 Working session-Three and the Concluding Session**

**5.1.** In the third working session, the participants were divided into 3 groups viz. **availability, access and utilization** on the basis of their experience and expertise. The groups were assigned to: i) Discuss general issues of their respective topic and suggest recommendations; ii) Make specific suggestions on the draft food policy in their respective areas and beyond; iii) The recommendations should include both policy and programme perspectives; and iii) Specify short, medium and long term measures and highlight priority areas/issues.

All the three groups presented recommendations and action plans. Following their presentations, participants of the workshop also took part in the discussion and put forward their suggestions. Incorporating those, three action plans on availability, access and utilization were prepared as shown bellow. The participants recommended that the papers of the workshop and the Action Plans prepared through the workshop may be printed into a book so that interested people can use it as a reference. The publication will be made under joint sponsorship of GOB and WFP, while necessary fund to be provided by the later.



## Action Plan for Availability of Food

Objective	Key targets	Time frame	Activities	Responsibility
Assuring required food supply	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Increase farm productivity</li> <li>- Assure input availability</li> <li>- Introduce new technology</li> <li>- Continue agricultural trade liberalization</li> <li>-</li> </ul>	Short term, Medium term, Long term	Agri. Policy & programme, Subsidies in input, Review of livestock & fisheries, Distribution from public stock	MOA, MF, LG Division, MoCoM, MOFDM, Other GO & NGO
	<p><b>Crop and Food Diversification</b></p> <p>Sustainable Agricultural intensification/Diversification through introduction of new technologies</p>	Short term, Medium term	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Awareness among producer/incentive</li> <li>- Develop marketing facilities</li> <li>- Extension services</li> <li>- Processing &amp; store facilities development</li> </ul>	MOA, MOFL, LG Division, GO & NGO
	<p><b>Coordination</b></p> <p>Strengthening coordination among different institutions and organizations</p>	Short term	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Expansion of FPMC</li> <li>- Formation of different appropriate committee at different level</li> </ul>	MOA, MOFDM, MOLAW, MOLAND, MOIND, Other allied
	<p><b>Marketing, Monitoring &amp; Evaluation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Price Support to farmers</li> <li>- Market development</li> <li>- Develop infrastructure</li> <li>- Development of Transport network</li> <li>- Development of Information Technology</li> </ul>	Short term, Medium term	Initiate major sector review of agriculture including marketing and extension. Connect all market place with modern IT communication	MOA, MOFDM LG Division, MoCom





### Action Plan for Access of Food

Objective	Key targets	Time frame	Activities	Responsibility
Increased physical, social and purchasing power of the poor	<b>Shock management</b> a. Strengthened measures for effective shock management b. Effective management & maintenance of food security stock c. Augmented food supply and price stabilization involving private sector	<b>Short to medium term</b>	a. Initiate special programme for disaster mitigation for agriculture b. Undertake emergency distribution from public stock c. Encourage private sector initiatives to augment domestic food supplies	MOFDM, MOA, MO Finance  MOFDM, MO Finance  MOFDM, MO Finance, MOC
	<b>Effective implementation of targeted intervention programme</b> a. Targeted food distribution b. Targeted cash transfer	<b>Short to medium term</b>	a. Targeted transfer to the most needy b. Conditional income transfer to the poor	MOFDM, MO Finance, MOWCA MOFDM, MOSW, MOLGRDC, Mo Finance
	<b>Employment generating income growth</b> a. Public investment in transport and communication b. Education, marketable skill & human resource development c. Support to women in income generating activities d. Promote rural and agro-based industries and enterprises e. Broad-based economic growth	<b>Short, medium and long term</b>	a. Investment in productivity enhancing appropriate technology with linkages b. Undertake extensive public education and marketable skill development programme c. Initiate more gender responsive programmes to promote women development d. Undertake productivity enhancing programmes for rural and agro-based enterprises e. Maintain macro-policy environment to ensure enhanced income for the poor	MOC, MOA, MOI, MOSICT, MOLGRDC MOWCA, MOSICT  MOWCA, MOI  MOLGRDC, MOI, MOA, MOFLS  MO Finance, MO Commerce



## Action Plan for Utilization and Nutrition

Objectives	Key Targets	Time frame	Actions	Responsibilities
Enabling framework for Utilization and Nutrition	Implement National Food and Nutrition Policy, 1997 and associated Plan of Action. Implement recommendations of the Report of the Task force on Comprehensive Food Policy for Bangladesh, 2000	short, medium & long term	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Appropriate budgetary allocation for specific programmes</li> <li>▪ Draft National Food Policy is to be finalized</li> <li>▪ NPAN is to be updated</li> <li>▪ Formulate National Food Safety Council</li> <li>▪ Formulate a separate policy for food safety and hygiene</li> <li>▪ Set-up Unified Food Safety Administration</li> <li>▪ Establish a separate cadre of professional for nutrition within an organizational structure</li> </ul>	MoFDM, MoHFW, BSTI, MOLGRD
Improvement in consumption of balanced diet	<p>i) Determination of standard for balanced food intake</p> <p>ii) Planning for Improvement in consumption of balanced diet</p> <p>iii) Surveys and studies at five years intervals</p>	short, medium & long term	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Set desirable targets for gradual achievement for ensuring consumption of balanced diet towards developing a nation with appropriate physical and mental ability</li> <li>▪ Determination of average per capita calorie requirement with respect to age, sex, statute, and occupational aspect of the population</li> <li>▪ Determine per capita cereal demand with respect to requirement and socio-economic aspects into consideration</li> <li>▪ Prepare and update dependable food balance sheet               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Mobilize financial resources, hire experts (a pool of availability expert, consumption economist, nutritionist, macro &amp; micro policy analyst/economist) and conduct studies</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	A. PC, BBS, FPMU (MoFDM), MoHFW, INFS, NNC, BIDS, MOA, Different CSO engaged in research B. Task Force
Adequate macro and micro nutrients and enhanced nutrition for vulnerable group	Improvement in nutritional indicators of women, disabled, children, and the poor	<p>Regular interval</p> <p>In every five years</p> <p>Short, medium and long term</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Identify and locate the vulnerable group using VAM, FIVIMS and other tools</li> <li>▪ KAP survey</li> <li>▪ Increase empowerment               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Knowledge</li> <li>- GO-NGO coordinating mechanism in implementing programmes</li> <li>- Social safety nets- Enhance effective targeted food distribution</li> <li>- Home gardening</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p>PC, BBS, FPMU.</p> <p>MoHFW, INFS, ICDDR &amp; other research org.</p> <p>MoFDM, MoHFW, MOSW, MOWCA, MOFinance,</p>



			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Institutional feeding (pre-schoolers through community &amp; school feeding) programme</li> <li>▪ Measured supplementation &amp; micro-nutrient fortification</li> </ul>	MOLGRD, MOInf., MOEdu.
Ensure balanced diet for all; no under or over nutrition	Reduced prevalence in anthropometrics and other indicators of malnutrition (attain MDG and PRSP targets)	Short, Medium and Long term	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Nutrition education programme- school syllabus, mass media campaign</li> <li>▪ Crop diversification</li> <li>▪ Diet diversification</li> <li>▪ Effective food supplementation and fortification</li> </ul>	MoHFW, MOA, MoFDM, MOEdu., MOLGRD, NNC, MOWCA, MOInf., MOLGRD, NGOs
Universal sanitation and safe drinking water for all	Reduced prevalence of water and food borne diseases  Improvement in water quality- reduction in arsenic level in drinking water	Short, Medium and Long term	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Health education including proper care and sanitary practices</li> <li>▪ Infrastructure development               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Public investment in water supply (community tube-well and water cleansing) and sanitation facilities</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ Maintenance of existing public facilities</li> </ul>	MOLGRD, MOHFW, MOA, MOEdu., MOInf., NGOs
Safe and quality food supply	Reduced prevalence of water and food borne diseases  Reduction in double burden of diseases  Reduction in double burden of malnutrition  Reduction in health care cost	Short, Medium and Long term	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Invest in safe storage, safe market places &amp; safe handling facilities</li> <li>▪ Harmonization of standards of food products</li> <li>▪ Develop and enforce grades, standards and quality</li> <li>▪ Develop and enforce proper labelling and packaging rules/standards</li> <li>▪ Adopt GAP, GHP, HACCP</li> <li>▪ Food safety database</li> <li>▪ Food safety research</li> <li>▪ Establish effective food borne disease surveillance system</li> <li>▪ Awareness build-up programmes</li> <li>▪ Co-ordinating mechanism to control indiscriminate use of harmful additives, preservatives, emulsifiers or toxic elements in food production, processing and marketing chain</li> <li>▪ Study of economic impact of (intrigent) standards</li> </ul>	MOFDM, MOA, MOHFW, MOLGRD, MOI (BSTI), MOEdu., MOFinance, MOHA, MOLJPA
Adequate health status	Implement HNPSP  Increased	Short, Medium and Long	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Programme of immunization (EPI)</li> <li>▪ Control of ARI</li> <li>▪ Prevention and control of diarrhoeal and other intestinal diseases</li> </ul>	MOHFW, MOEdu., MOLGRD, NNC,



	doctors, hospital beds, and other facilities for health services  Increased private health care services	term	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Nutrition programme involving community mobilization</li> <li>▪ Community based nutrition services- children, reproductive aged women</li> <li>▪ Control non-communicable diseases (NCD)</li> </ul>	MOInf., MOFDM, Private ent., NGOs
Promote healthy life style	Increased KAP	Short, Medium and Long term	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Invest in nutrition and mass awareness programme</li> <li>▪ Invest in upholding social capital</li> <li>▪ Initiate networking of nutrition research capacity</li> <li>▪ Establish a national Institute of Food, Nutrition and Human Health for research and training in nutrition, food safety and hygiene</li> </ul>	MOHFW, MOSW, MOFDM, MOEdu., MOLGRD, NNC, MOInf., MOLGRD, MOYS, NGOs

**5.2.** In the concluding session, Ms. Usha Mishra Joshi of WFP made an overview of the deliberations and recommendations made by presenters, discussants, and the participants. While summarising the suggestions came out of the deliberations she told that we need to be looking at the trends of population growth, agricultural commodity versus climate changes and other challenges that might have impact on the future self-sufficiency of availability of food grains and put emphasis on the need of increasing budgetary allocations for agricultural research and development. She told that agricultural diversification has to be linked with nutritional requirements of the people. This was one of the overwhelming recommendations that came out from the discussion she added. She said “The whole issue of coordination was brought to the fore. We need coordination not only on the implementation side but coordination at the apex level is much more important and also difficult to attain. The coordination is not about project approach; but the coordination is about the whole approach as to how you formulate your policy.” She also mentioned that people had started to realize that along with social safety net programme, there was a need for strengthening our shock management. She hoped that the recommendation about strengthening and expanding the FPMU at FPMC would help furthering the food security dialogue among the various stakeholders. She reiterated the need for doing further research on nutritional standards- the research that has started under the chairmanship of DG, FPMU has to be taken up further. She thanked the participants for their active participation.

Terminology setting standards as an extremely important issue, Mr SK. A. K. Motahar Hossain DG, FPMU emphasized the need to increase the capacity of our population and opined that we should at the apex level decide what should be the physical attainment of the population of Bangladesh. The projection of production should not only be rice and cereal but we should also promote non-cereal items, he said. He further added that we should first fix what should be our calorie intake, nature of our food basket and accordingly we should make our projection. He told that we need expert advice for this projection and drew attention for assistance in this matter.



Mr. M. K. Anwar, honourable Minister of Agriculture and the chief guest of the concluding session told that for ensuring balanced diet, we have to reduce the area under rice for giving space for other crops. This is an economic process. Research funding has been in constraints in recent years with the reduction of donor funding. In spite of that we have several programmes in agricultural sector for diet diversification (**The text of his speech is appended as annex-4**).

Mr. Edward Kallon of WFP underscored the need for social awareness and employment creation for the poor for attainment of food security.

Mr. Muhammad Fazlur Rahman, Secretary, Ministry of Food and Disaster Management thanked the organisers, the participants, the resource person and the Minister for Agriculture, the Minister for Food and Disaster Management for their kind presence and contributions. He told that the recommendations coming out of the workshop would be actively considered by the Ministry and be implemented in phases.

**5.3.** The workshop was ended with vote of thanks from and to the chair.



*Annex-1*

*Joint Effort of MOFDM and WFP, Bangladesh*

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## National Workshop on Food Security in Bangladesh

### **VENUE:**

**IDB Bhaban (3<sup>rd</sup> floor), Begum Rokeya Sarani, Sher-e-Bangla Nagar, Dhaka, Bangladesh  
19-20 October 2005**

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### **Workshop Programme**

#### **19 October 2005: Day-1**

**09:00 hrs**      **Registration of Participants**  
Guests and Participants take their seats

#### **Inaugural Session**

09:30 hrs      Recitation from the Holy Quran

09:35 hrs      Welcome Address:  
**Mr. Sk. A. K. Motahar Hossain**  
Director General, Food Planning and Monitoring Unit (FPMU)  
Ministry of Food and Disaster Management (MOFDM)

09:40 hrs      Presentation of Key Note Paper “Current Food Security and Challenges”  
**Ms. Usha Mishra Joshi**, Senior Adviser, WFP  
**Mr. Sk. A. K. Motahar Hossain**, DG, FPMU

09:55 hrs      Speech:  
**Mr. Edward Matthew Kallon**  
Officer-in-Charge, World Food Programme

10:05 hrs      Speech:  
**Mr. Asadul Habib Dulu, MP**  
Special Guest, Honourable Deputy Minister  
Ministry of Food and Disaster Management

10:15 hrs      Speech and Opening of the Workshop:  
**Chowdhury Kamal Ibne Yusuf, MP**  
Chief Guest, Honourable Minister  
Ministry of Food and Disaster Management

10:25hrs      Speech:  
**Mr. Muhammad Fazlur Rahman**  
Chairperson of the Session and Secretary-in-Charge, MOFDM

10:30 hrs      End of the Inaugural session



**Working Session-1: Chairperson - Mr. Syed Ataur Rahman, Additional Secretary  
Ministry of Agriculture**

- 11:00 hrs Presentation on “Food Security Situation in Bangladesh: Food Availability  
Mr. M. M Rahman, FAO Consultant & Md. Shafiqul Islam Khan, Research  
Director, FPMU, MOFDM
- 11:15 hrs Presentation on “Food Security and Access to Food”  
Mr. Ruhul Amin, Deputy Chief, FPMU, Mr. Naser Farid, Assistant Chief, FPMU  
and Syed Amdadul Huq, Additional Director, FPMU, MOFDM
- 11:30 hrs Presentation on “Food Security Situation in Bangladesh: Utilization, Nutrition and  
Food Safety”  
Dr. Asirul Hoque, Ph. D, Implementation Specialist, National Nutrition Project  
(NNP), Dr. Shah Mahfuzur Rahman Ph. D, Programme Manager, Institute of  
Public Health (IPH) and Mr. Ruhul Amin Talukder, Additional Director, FPMU
- 11:45 hrs Presentation on “Setting a Standard Cereal Intake for Balanced Nutrition in  
Bangladesh”  
Dr. H. K. M Yusuf, Professor, Dhaka University, Mr. Abdul Matin Khandaker,  
Research Director, FPMU and Md. Asadul Islam, Research Associate, Bangladesh  
Institute of Development Studies (BIDS)
- 12:00 hrs Discussion on presentations by Designated Discussants:  
Availability:  
Mr. Syed Ataur Rahman, Additional Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture  
Access:  
1. Mr. Wajed Ali Khan, Joint Secretary (Disaster Management), MOFDM  
2. Ms. Yolande Wright, Environment and Livelihoods Adviser, DFID  
3. Mr. Sk. Rokibul Alam, Commodity Manager, SHOUHARDO, CARE  
Utilization and Nutrition:  
1. Mr. Zahid Hossain, Director General, Directorate of Food  
2. Chief Executive Officer, Dhaka Municipal Corporation
- 12:40 hrs Open discussion on the papers
- 13:05 hrs Wrap up speech by the Session Chairperson
- 13:15 hrs Prayer

**Working Session-2: Chairperson- Mr.Syed Ataur Rahman, Additional Secretary,  
Ministry of Agriculture**

- 13:45 hrs Presentation on “Regional Food Security Experience: Lessons Learnt from India  
and Timor Leste”  
Mr. Balparitosh Dash, WFP, India
- 14:00 hrs Presentation on “Challenges in Addressing Hunger and Poverty in Bangladesh: The  
Case for a Twin Track Approach ”  
G. Anriquez, C. R. Lovendal, M. Nordanstad and K. Stamoulis, FAO, Rome



- 14:15 hrs Discussion on presentations by Designated Discussants:  
Dr. Sajjad Zohir, Senior Research Fellow, BIDS  
Mr. Sanwar Ali, Humanitarian Programme Coordinator, Oxfam
- 14:30 hrs Open Discussion
- 14:40 hrs Presentation on “MDG, PRSP and Draft National Food Policy (2005) of Bangladesh”  
Mr. Sushen Chandra Das, Research Director & Mr. Naser Farid, Asstt. Chief, FPMU
- 14.55 hrs Discussion on presentations by Designated Discussants:  
Dr. Mujibur Rahman, Senior Economist & Member, Bangladesh Rice Foundation  
Dr. Md. Asirul Hoque, Implementation Specialist, NNP
- 15:10 hrs Open Discussion
- 15:20 hrs Wrap up by the Session Chairperson & Formation of Groups
- 15:30 hrs Closing of Day-1

## **20 October 2005: Day-2**

### **Working Session-3 and Closing**

**Chief Guest - Mr. M. K Anwar, Honourable Minister for Agriculture**  
**Chairperson- Mr. Muhammad Fazlur Rahman, Secretary-in-Charge, MOFDM**

- 09:00 hrs Briefing for Group Discussion by DG, FPMU/Secretary, MOFDM
- 09:15 hrs Group discussions and formulation of recommendations
- 10:00 hrs Presentation of Group Recommendations
- 10:30 hrs Break
- 10:45 hrs Group discussions and formulation of Action Plan
- 11:30 hrs Presentation of Action Plan by Groups
- 12:15 hrs Comments and Suggestions:  
**Mr. M. K Anwar**  
Chief Guest, Honourable Minister for Agriculture
- 12:30 hrs Adoption of Recommendations and Action Plan
- 12:45 hrs Wrap up by the Session Chairperson
- 13:00 hrs End of the Workshop.





## Annex-2

### Participants list

<b>GoB:</b>		
<b>Sl. No</b>	<b>Name and Designation</b>	<b>Agency</b>
1.	Mr Motahar Hossain	DG, FPMU
2.	Mr. Nirmal Kumar Halder, Asstt. Chief	MOA
3.	Mr. Moslem Uddin Miah, PSO, BARC	MOA
4.	Mr. AKM Enamul Huq, Director	MOA
5.	Mr. Fazlul Haque, DD, Monitoring, DAE	MOA
6.	Md. Abul Qasem Bhuyan, Senior Assistant Secretary	MOFDM
7.	Mr. Md. Hajiqul Islam, Assistant Chief	FPMU, MOFDM
8.	Mr. Sushen Chandra Das, Research Director	FPMU, MOFDM
9.	Mr. Md. Shafiqul Islam Khan, Research Director	FPMU, MOFDM
10.	Mr. Badrul Hasan, RC Food, Dhaka	DGF
11.	Dr. Mohammad Shahadat Hossain Mahmud, DD (VGD-2)	DRR
12.	Mrs. Shahanara Khatun, Deputy Director	DG, DMB
13.	Mr. Farrukh Ahmed, Asstt. Chief (study-3)	MO Finance
14.	Mr Faisal Ahmed, Asstt. Chief (study-1)	MO Finance
15.	Mr. A.H.M Afzal Hossain, Deputy Secy (coordination-1)	ERD
16.	Mr. Sattya Ranjan Mondal, DD	BBS
17.	Md Shaihidul Islam, S. Research Fellow	BIDS
18.	Mrs. Shaoli Suman, Senior Assistant Secretary	MOFDM
19.	Mr. Md. Amdadul Hoque, Addl. Director	FPMU, MOFDM
20.	Mr. Md. Ruhul Amin, Director	FPMU, MOFDM
21.	Mr. Md. Naser Farid, Assistant Chief	FPMU, MOFDM
22.	Mr Abdur Rahman, DS	DGF
23.	Md. Tofazzol Hossain, CCDR, Dhaka	DGF
24.	Mr Nazim Uddin Ahmed	DGF
25.	Mr. Netai Sen, Additional Director	DGF
26.	Mr. Sukomol Chandra Sutra Dhor, Dy Chief	Dept. of Fisheries, MOFL
27.	Mr. Shapon Kumar Modok, Asstt. Director,	DOL, MOFL, Farmgate, Dhaka
28.	Mr. Subash Chandra Sarker, SAS (Budget-	MO Finance
29.	Mrs. Rukshana Hashin, Sr. Asstt. Secretary	LGD
30.	Mr. Muhammad Ahsanul Jabbar, Sr. Asstt. Secretary	LGD
31.	Mr. Md. Abul Monsur Fakir, Jt. Director (Irrigation), BRDB	RD Palli Bhaban, 5 Kawran Bazar, Dhaka-1215
32.	Mr. Shudhansu Shekhor Biswas, Director (Admn.)	RD Rural Development Academy, Bogra
33.	Mr. Kazi Muhammad Monzur-e Muksed, SAS, (Coordination-5)	ERD
34.	Ms. Rawsan Ara Begum, SAS	MOSW
35.	Mr. Ranajit Kumar Biswas, Dy Secretary	MOLabor Welfare



36.	Mr. Md. Aminul Islam, SAS	MOCHT
37.	Mr. Mohammad Nuruddin, DD	BMD, Agargaon, Dhaka
38.	Mr Mr. Olid Bin Asad, Programmer	MOFDM
39.	Mr. Abdul Matin Khandaker, Research Director	FPMU, MOFDM
40.	Mr.Md. Ruhul Amin Talukder, Addl. Director	FPMU, MOFDM
41.	Mr. Md. Abul Kalam Azad, DD (VGD-1)	DRR
42.	Mr. Mizanur Rahman, Deputy Director	DG, DMB
43.	Dr. Shantona Rani Haldar, National Expert, Monitoring & Evaluation,	CDMP
44.	Md. Abu Baker Hawlader, DS	MOHFW
45.	Md. Eshaque Ali, Secy In Charge, NNC	MOHFW
46.	Dr Asirul Haque, NNP	MOHFW
47.	Mrs. Lipika Bhadra, SAS (PH-3)	MOHFW
48.	Mrs.Shikha Sarker, Senior Asstt. Chief	MOHFW
49.	Dr Ferdous, DS	MOFDM
50.	Md. Badruzzaman	DGF
51.	Mr. Serajul Haidar, Sr. Asstt. Secretary	LGD
52.	Mr. Muhammad Mohiuddin, SAS	MOC
53.	Dr Shah Mahfuzur Rahman	IPH
54.	Mr AZM Musharraf, Director	-
55.	Mr. Wadud Hasan, CAO	MOFDM
56.	Mr. Kabir, Research Officer	BIDS
57.	Mr. Asadul Islam	BIDS
58.	Dr. H.K.M Yusuf, Professor	Professor, Dhaka University
59.	Mr. Sreenibash Deb Nath, Asstt. Chief	Planning Commission
60.	Md Wazed Ali Khan, Joint Secretary	MFDM
61.	Mr. Amulua Kumar Debnath, Director	IMED, Mo Planning
62.	Md Obaidul Quader, CSO & Head	SPARRSO
63.	Md Emran Hossain	FPMU
64.	Md Mahfuzur Rahman, DG	DRR
65.	Mr. Ruhul Amin, AO	FPMU
66.	Mr. Doyanand Debnath	IMED, MO Planning
67.	Md Zahid Hossain, DG Food	Dir. of Food
68.	Mrs. Arjuman Shahana Banu, Dy. Chief	Planning Commission
69.	Ms. Fahmida Akhter	-
70.	Ms. Sharmind Neelormi	Jahangirnagar University



<b>Donor/International Organization:</b>		
<b>Sl. No</b>	<b>Name and Designation</b>	<b>Agency</b>
1.	Mr M M Rahman	FAO
2.	Mr. I. Juergens	FAO
3.	Ms Janet Donnelly, First Secretary	Australian High Commission
4.	Mr. Shaheen Mahmud, Senior Programme Manager	AusAid, Australian High Commission
5.	Mr. C R Lovendal	FAO
6.	Mr. V. Labe	EC
7.	Mr. Howard Hjort	FAO
8.	Mr. Ciro Fiorillo	FAO
9.	Ms. Tobassum	WHO
10.	Dr Ekramul Ahsan	EC
11.	Ms. Kazi Eliza	SC UK
12.	Mr. Munir Ahmed	SC UK
13.	Selva Sinnadurai	International Red Cross
14.	Mr. Farid Hasan	OXFAM
15.	Dr Salahuddin Ahmed	Save the Children (USA)
16.	Ms Yolande Wright	DFID
17.	Mr Ryan Belasso, Commodity Coordinator	World Vision
18.	Mr. SK Rokibul Alam	Care Bangladesh
19.	Mr. Ralf Ernst, Climate Change Technical Adviser	UNOPS
20.	Ms. Chantell Wittel	HKI
21.	Mr. A. S. Mahmud, Programme Advisor	Save the Children- USA

<b>NGO/Private:</b>		
<b>Sl. No</b>	<b>Name and Designation</b>	<b>Agency</b>
1.	Mr Rafiqul Islam	BRAC
2.	Mr. Anthony D' Cruze	RDRS
3.	Mr. A Rashid	Bidheep
4.	Mr. Imrul Kayes	RDRS
5.	Mr. ATM Golam Mustafa	JMKS
6.	Mr. Md Shahjahan Pradhan	Jubo Karmashangthan Society
7.	Mr. Salim Chowdhury	Jagorani Chakra
8.	Dr. Mujibur Rahman	BRF
9.	Mr Jana Lal Chakma	CIPD
10.	Mr. Manzur Ahmed, Advisor	FBCCI
11.	Dr. TM Alamgir Azad, Project Manager	PLAN Bangladesh
12.	Mr. Narayan Das, Programme Asstt.	CPD
13.	Mr. AKM Nuruzzaman	PKSF
14.	Mr. Partha Sarathi Chowdhury	FIVDB
15.	Md Monir Hossain	BHDS



<b>WFP:</b>		
1.	Ms. Kartini Oppusunggu, Chief, Resource Management, Mobilization and Partnership Service	WFP
2.	Ms. Usha Mishra Joshi, Adviser, SPPA Section	WFP
3.	Mr. Rezaul Karim, Manager, Programme Support	WFP
4.	Ms. Nusha Chowdhury, Head, VAM Unit	WFP
5.	Mr. M Muktadir Mazumder, (Institutional Support)	WFP
6.	Mr. Syed Khabir Ahmed, Head, Policy and Planning	WFP
7.	Ms. Farah Aziz, VAM	WFP
8.	Mr. S M Murshid, Head, HRCBT Unit	WFP
9.	Ms. Ofelia Bornay, Adviser, Knowledge Management	WFP
10.	Mr. Kh. Shahidul Haque, Manager, FC Section	WFP
11.	Ms. Shireen Banu, Head, Dhaka Regional Office	WFP
12.	Ms. Shahida Akther, Project Officer, VGD	WFP
13.	Mr. Nurul Afsar, Technical Adviser (Fortified Atta)	WFP
14.	Mr. John McHarris, Adviser, DPR Section	WFP
15.	Ms. Rehana Banoo, Manager, DEP Section	WFP
16.	Mr. Manju Morshed, Programme Officer, DEP	WFP
17.	Ms. Mariko Hattori, Programme Officer, DEP Section	WFP
18.	Ms. Hasna Hena, Head, IFS Unit	WFP
19.	Mr. Akhter Hussain, Head, Logistics Unit	WFP
20.	Ms. Herma Majoor, Technical Adviser, FSVGD	WFP
21.	Mr. Emamul Haque, Head, Advocacy Unit	WFP
22.	Mr. Mostafa Anwar Hossain, Asso. Prog. Officer, NE	WFP



### Annex-3

#### **Speech of the Chief Guest of the Inaugural Session Mr. Chowdhury Kamal Ibne Yusuf, Honourable Minister, MOFDM**

***Mr. Chairman, WFP representative, Keynote Speakers, Officials, Media representatives, Distinguished guests, Ladies and Gentlemen***

Assalamu Alaikum and Good Morning,

I am happy indeed to be able to here with you to attend the ‘National Workshop on Food Security in Bangladesh’ jointly organized by the **Ministry of Food & Disaster Management** and **World Food programme - Bangladesh**.

Food is the basic human need and is of highest priority among the daily necessities. According to the Article-15 (a) of the constitution of Bangladesh, it is the fundamental responsibility of the State to secure its citizens to the provision of basic necessities of food. Ensuring food security for all is one of the major challenges that Bangladesh faces today. Despite significant achievements in food grain production, food security at national, household and individual levels remain a matter of major concern for the Government.

The prime goal of MDG ‘*eradicating extreme poverty and hunger*’ targets to **halve the proportion of people who suffer from hunger**, between 1990 and 2015. The food security situation has to improve dramatically, all over the globe, to achieve this hunger goal. The major food security problem in Bangladesh is – ‘**about 60 million of people are currently remaining below the established food based poverty line, out of which 25 millions are living in extreme poverty, who are also severely undernourished, despite the impressive increases in food grain availability**’. This means that our success in making staple food availability coexists with very high prevalence of under-nourishment and malnutrition.

Until recently, food security discussions and planning have been centred around much narrower focus on the availability issues of food security although access to adequate diets and utilization of food were generally the major constraints on food security. Various steps have been taken by our government to maintain a dependable food security in the country. Most of the programmes under ‘Public Food Distribution System (PFDS)’ target the hard-core poor, vulnerable and disadvantaged population, as a short-term measure, to provide income transfer and to mitigate/cope with the disaster related shocks they face. But as a long-term solution we like to establish Corporate Plan for Disaster Management.

This year the PFDS is releasing about 1.5 million metric tons of its grain stock, more than 80% of which is to address the problem of food security. The targeted programmes are: Vulnerable Group Development (VGD), Vulnerable Group Feeding (VGF), Food for Works/Test Relief (FFW/TR), Gratuitous and other Relief etc.



Along with these food-based programme cash have been provided to support the vulnerable and poor families under Rural Maintenance programme (RMP), Cash for Work, Cash for Education,

Old-Age Pension Scheme, Allowances for Widows etc. Moreover, to maintain stable price in the food grain market, OMS (Open Market Sale) and Low Priced Village Rationing programme for the hardcore in targeted areas currently underway using public food stock.

I am glad to know that this workshop will discuss all the aspect of food-security - availability, access, utilization & nutrition - thereby initiate concerted actions in food policy front. The Ministry of Food and Disaster Management already, drafted a National Food Policy, covering all aspects of comprehensive food security, which is in process of getting Cabinet approval. An action plan for implementing the National Food Policy (in collaboration with all the related ministries & agencies) is planned to be adopted, through a TA Project entitled 'National Food Policy Capacity Strengthening Programme' of the FPMU. The challenges before Bangladesh's food security policy and disaster management have made it imperative to have a possible coordination between the interdependent sectors. Let us look at the future with confidence and common resolve.

Moreover, the Government has already approved the PRSP, which is in the process of implementation involving all stakeholders and we hope that by implementation of PRSP the problem of poverty and hunger will be reduced in a short time.

I hope this workshop will be very fruitful and the nature and depth of discussions cutting across party lines, all of us can adopt a common approach to the problems of food security. I think this workshop will play a strong role for national consensus for an effective food policy action plan in near future.

Finally, I like to thank the organisers, particularly WFP-Bangladesh for organising this workshop in collaboration with FPMU of the Ministry of Food and Disaster Management. I also thank the organizer for inviting me to this august session. I hope the conclusions and recommendations of this workshop will be helpful in formulating an **interlinked food, livelihood and social protection strategy** for Bangladesh. I appreciate your active participation for all the sessions of this workshop.

**Now I declare the workshop open.**

Thank you all.

Allah Hafez.

Bangladesh Zindabad.



## Annex-4

### **Speech of the Chief Guest of the Concluding Session Mr. M. K. Anwar, MP, Honourable Minister, Ministry of Agriculture:**

Mr Chairperson of the national workshop on food security in Bangladesh, this is the most important subject for Bangladesh and many other countries. Distinguished participants, distinguished representatives from WFP, FAO and other organizations, ladies and gentlemen,

Assalamu-Alaikum and a very good morning to all of you.

I am indeed very grateful to my colleagues of the Ministry of Food and Disaster management and WFP for giving me the opportunity to attend this workshop. Ms. Usha Mishra Joshi has given a very good outline of the discussions and the resume of the recommendations. I thank her for the same.

To start with, let me begin with some of the statistics, which has been haunting me for quite some time. Is Bangladesh self sufficient in food grain? If not, what is the position? Statistics points out two different directions. We are at the moment producing more than 27 million of food grains. In one of the papers presented in this workshop, it is mentioned that total requirement for food grain per person is 464 grams. Total requirement of food grains according to this standard is about 23.7 million only. Our production is more than 23.7 million even if we deduct 11% as natural wastage. Therefore we are left with enough food grains to feed the country. But we are importing three million tons of wheat and rice. So where is the problem? We have to find out the answer if we have to have good programmes for our people.

The standard of cereal intake has been proposed at 372 grams a day. This is quite alarming. According to this standard the total requirement of food grains is only 19 million tons. But we are producing more than 27 million tons.

Bureau of Statistics (BBS) is the official bureau and what they say is the last word as long as statistics is concerned. I have found myself uncomfortable with many of the statistics of BBS. Let me give you an example. During the last 2 to 3 years, the BBS said the production of onion was 150,000 tons. This estimation seemed too low to me, I therefore had a discussion with BBS to know what method they were using for estimation. Unfortunately, I found out that they were not using any scientific sampling or crop cutting for minor crops like onion. For major crops of course they have some better procedure of estimation.

Last time I asked the Directorate of Agriculture to give the plot numbers of onion production to the BBS and let them carry out sampling at least in one union, upazila or district to ascertain as to how far the estimation of the Ministry was correct. This year I was pleasantly surprised to see that the BBS has upgraded their estimation to 550,000 from 150,000 tons although the estimation of the Ministry of Agriculture is 650,000 tons. But this is quite acceptable. This is only a tip of the iceberg so far as statistics is concerned. Therefore we need to sort out whatever statistics we have and one of the responsibilities of FPMU should be to find out whether the statistics are correct.



I came across a study by the World Bank, which is a four to five year old. The author has explained that the imports from our adjoining country India are usually by land route and by trucks. In many cases the importers bring other items in disguise and take advantage of the duty concessions for food items. Therefore, there is every reason to question whether the Ministry can actually import 3 million tons of wheat and rice. This reminds me of a famous quotation on statistics, "Lies damn lies, and that is statistics."

I have to know as Agriculture Minister where do we stand? Should we go on increasing the production of rice or decelerate its production and divert some land for other products for a balanced diet. Every year there is degradation of land quality and fertility because of natural conditions and some human conditions like use of unbalanced fertilizers, excessive use of chemical fertilizers and so on. These are the adverse conditions. Therefore, we have to know how to proceed.

My view is that we cannot ensure balanced diet for this nation unless we can decrease the acreage under rice. That is the first thing we have to do. For this, we will have to encourage the producers to shift to other kinds of crops. I cannot do it by order or ordinance. It has to be implemented through economic process. The production numbers and figures for every crop are not settled in our country. You have referred to pulses and oil seeds; we have increased their production but I think that the production number remains to be settled. The BBS should be involved on every discussion on these issues, because they are the legal authority to fix the numbers or statistics.

There has been a sense of complacency about agricultural production in the world, particularly in the developing countries after the green revolution in the 1960s and 70s. This complacency has also been encouraged by our international partners. The agriculture budget in the 1970 was about 22-23% of our development budget. Today it has come down to 2.5%.

Agriculture was mostly funded by external sources. It has now completely dried up except for some technical assistance programmes. There is no investment programme in agriculture by bi-lateral or international donors. This has brought us to a plateau and it seems that there is a sense of lethargy to go any further both in yield and production.

We have good research outfit in agriculture. Our people have brought out more than 350 varieties of different crops including about 45 varieties of rice and paddy. But it seems that there is a sense of stagnancy primarily because the funding has diminished. Somebody quoted a figure of 0.4% of GDP on research. I would be happy if it would be 4%. My understanding is that it is only 2.5% in the developed countries whereas the developing countries average research spending is 1%.

The cost of production in agriculture is the highest in this region and probably in the world. We claim that we have increased our agricultural production three times. Doubled vegetable production and increased wheat production ten times. But why then the poverty level has not decreased? That means we have not given the farmers due share of the produce. The middlemen have taken away the benefits from the farmers. May I remind my friend from the ministry of food particularly that we have been constantly and consciously trying to decrease the





procurement price of paddy. The procurement price at the moment shows an artificial figure without any word of reality. It is only last year we could make an agreed figure for the farmers. If we offer fewer prices to the farmers they would be deprived all the more. If we go on depriving the farmers they would run away from the field. After sometime, the production would come down because non-agricultural employment is increasing very fast and it is more profitable than languishing in the mud field of paddy. So the question of supporting the farmers is of prime importance.

The WTO rules allow for countries like ours 10% of agricultural GDP as subsidy. Before this government came to power the agricultural GDP was 60,000 crore and the agricultural subsidy was 100 crore which could be only 0.1% of agricultural GDP. We have raised the subsidy to 2000 crore which means it has increased agricultural subsidy to 2-3% of the agricultural GDP.

Let us see what is happening elsewhere in the world. In Switzerland, agricultural production worth 1 dollar, Government handout is 69 cents; it is 65 cents in Japan; 35 in EU. In America each rice farmer gets about 75 thousand dollar in a year. In China in 1998 and 2003, the food grain production decreased by 104 million tons. When this happened they started fire-fighting operations. This and last year their production has again gone up. They were distributing 14 billion dollars as handout to the farmers. India is giving 10 billion dollars.

Irrigation is the most expensive component in our country, which accounts for about 28% of the variable cost of production. In India, it is 13%, in Thailand 8% and in Vietnam 6%. In India the electricity is given free in many of the provinces for irrigation. Average rate of electricity all over India for agriculture purposes is 29 paise whereas their average national electric tariff is Rs. 4.35. We don't have such system in our country.

Although research had come to stagnation because of funding problem but we have re-started the whole outfit. I hope in course of next 3-4 years our researchers would be able to give you a better result. We have about 13 million of farmers but not a single place for training. We have about 29 million workers in agriculture, but we don't have any training place for them also. We have identified these weaknesses and we are going in a big way. Unless the farmers are looked after properly, they will shift to other profession even to a roadside shop, because those are more lucrative.

Regarding balanced diet, we have started quite a few programmes. Whenever we speak about balanced diet, the alternative crops we require are mostly perishable crops like vegetables and fish. People through away when the price of vegetables is very low. This problem could be solved only we had a chain of cold storages. Government has decided not to go for cold storages because the business people are not interested in it.

For marketing, we need agro processing of crops. We need to increase the shelf life of the products. Unfortunately, we don't have any facilities in this regard.

Post harvesting technology in our country is very weak. Experts say that we could get probably another 5% of higher production if we could have proper post harvest technology.



Another issue is soil degradation. There are two causes for this: i) changing of nature around the world; and ii) problems with water from our common rivers. These problems are increasing the salinity of the coastal areas. Therefore, that area is now earmarked for shrimp production. We are trying to develop grains and paddy, which are salinity resistant.

The population problem is again another threat. Every year 3 millions mouths are added with roughly 2% population growth of the country. We are also losing at least 1% of our cultivable land out of production. Sometimes we establish a small factory but acquire 30 acres of land and keep it fallow. Later we sell the land at higher price, but unfortunately it goes out of agriculture. If this trend continues, in the course of next 50 years there will be no cultivable land in our country.

There are 2 ideas regarding the issue of access: one is the affordability of the consumers and the other is economic price to the farmers. These two clashes with one another vehemently. We have so long taken the softer action of depriving the farmers, but we cannot continue to do this any longer.

Agriculture contribution to GDP is about 23-24% at present in Bangladesh. But this is mere statistics. As Ms Usha pointed out if we take into account backward and forward linkage of agriculture it contributes around 50% to the economy. If we can successfully implement the backward and forward linkages, the agriculture contribution will be higher than 50%. For example pineapples are sold at Tk. 7-10 per piece, but if we canned them it could be sold at a much higher price.

We have export market for vegetables, because they are cheap. We are facing tremendous problem in respect of cargo space and packaging.

Lastly, I would like to reiterate that if we neglect the farmers they would fly away because there are other avenues and that will be a disaster for food security in Bangladesh.

Thank you for listening to me with patience.