

## International Rural Woman's Day 2008 (An UN resolution day)

# Food security has to be considered based on the frame work of food sovereignty.

### 1. Why we are raising this issue?

Due to low production of agriculture goods in last year, rapid increased of fuel price has made an impact to world wide price hike on food grain especially rice and wheat enormously. Most of the export oriented countries like India; has tried to make buffer stock of food through stopping the export or increase the prices of 300-500% overnight (e.g. India has increased their price of rice export @ of \$1000 instead of \$300.). That's why rice importing countries like Bangladesh had to face a tough situation in maintaining the food security through import of necessary food grain. Because in one way Bangladesh has to keep their people in peace through subsidized price in case of food distribution and on the other hand country had to bear a huge cost to import of necessary food. In this context there are a new learning has taken place that, we have to achieve the self sustainability on food security at any cost. This learning's has become more immense when we see that the developed countries have started to invest their agriculture lands for producing Bio-Fuel instead of exporting their surplus food to poor and developing countries. Even many developing countries like Brazil, India and South America have shown more interest to produce Bio-Fuel rather producing food. Meanwhile IMF and World Bank and ADB has giving advice to many developing countries like Bangladesh for initiating the Bio-Fuel production and its export against food produce, which can be more profitable and also can be imported necessary food by exporting

In this circumstance, it has been realized that, least development countries should be achieved food sustainability in any way through increasing agriculture production. In Bangladesh, population has been increasing trend, but in behind we are losing our arable land gradually. In an average we have to import food near 20-30 lac ton per year which is a big challenge for Bangladesh indeed. So there is no doubt that we want our food sovereignty and food security. But we think that, our food security concept will may fall in hazier situation if we deny the policy of food sovereignty frame work.

### 2. How food sovereignty concept is developed?

We have to think and considered how "Food Sovereignty" concept has developed and come into forward. In 1992, the Farmer's International Federation 'Lavia Compenia' has introduced this word "Food Sovereignty" at first and later on Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) uses this concept officially.

From our point of views, introduce of food sovereignty concept should be considered into three ways. In 80-90<sup>th</sup> decades Europe and America has introduced and industrial agriculture which was causing of huge devastation of nature, human health and ecological environment and also created a hardship for them to survive. The major employment has been created through agriculture sector in many developing countries. But small, marginal and poor farmers are evicted from their lands due to introducing of commercial agriculture in the name of technological development of that country's agriculture sectors.

Besides, we also observing that introducing of Genetically Modified Organism (GMO) and Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) also played a vested role of losing control of farmers ownership on seeds gradually and it's gone to multinational companies.

We have also observed that how the farmers have been harassed due to filed sue by "Monsanto" (A giant multinational company produce agriculture product and pesticides) in developed countries like Canada. There are 01 million farmers have suicide in India becoming indebted due to purchase seed from markets. Latest the crisis is added that, investment of agriculture lands and finance has been increasing to produce Bio-Fuel rather ignoring the peoples need to increase investment on food production. Land using trend has been crossed more than 20% in Europe and America towards producing Bio-Fuel.

With considering the above issues, following questions are raised 1. Are we really create an endangered situation for nature and man kind to produce the food? 2. Is it justified to evict the small and poor farmers in the name of food production increase? 3. Is it justified to hand over the seed ownership to MNCs and make the farmers hardship in case of their survive? 4. Would we give emphasis to produce Bio-Fuel for motor cars instead of saving peoples livelihood?

Basically **Food Sovereignty** concept has been developed in proceeding on above issues.

### 3. What's the concept of Food Sovereignty? Does it dismiss the concept of food security?

By born a man has right to live with food. This right has been recognized in different world wide human rights charters. The rights of having food of a man have been recognized in different constitutional dossiers of many countries in the world including Bangladesh. But this right to having food will have to be established considering the choice of an individual and not to dilute his right of long term survival strategy. That's why the concept of "Food Security" and "Food Sovereignty" is never contradictory; more over food security will have to be based on food sovereignty frame work. The following matrix will make easier between the concept of food security and sovereignty

Subject	Food security	Food sovereignty
Choice	Will be set based on supply and availability	Will be based on local culture
Production	Growth any way	Growth but keeping balance of nature
Personal rights	Emphasis the business and profit	Emphasis to save small farmers
Seeds	Depend on market and companies	Depend on farmer and his traditional practices.
Seed technology	Hi breed and terminator technology, only crops but no seed	Crops and with seeds
Agriculture activities	Only for production	Production but overall integrated with local culture
Access in foods	Depend on personal capacity and purchasing ability.	Traditional right of all human being.

So we can tell that, the food security concept will not to be seen as a means of production and will be add and integrated the ecological balance (here physical safety of human beings has been considered as a part of nature), farmers owned and traditional technology, safety measures for small farmers and their choice and rights.

#### **4. What is going to be happened in Bangladesh's Agriculture sector?**

So in the light of above issues and considering the future trend (economical and political) of Bangladesh we want to put some specific proposals about food security. We are putting these proposals keeping in front of International Rural Women Day (IRWD) observation. Because we think that, ensuring food security will needs to ensure effective participation of rural women in our aquaculture sector. But the situations those might be happened in future in Bangladesh are as followings,

1. Government will give emphasis to develop the agriculture sector and increase the subsidies (in the year of 1970 it was 30%, in 2004 it was only 0.5% and at present government has increased @ 1.5%). But question is raised whether these subsidies would go to the farmers or fertilizer dealers? Who will be benefited small or big farmers, if it will go to the farmers really?

2. Government will also try to introduce modern technologies in agriculture sector towards increase of productivity which might eviction of small farmers from their lands. In that situation where they will go and is there any alternatives to ensure employment for these loosing farmers?

3. In the name of production increase, government has been also promoting the so called hi-breed and terminator technology in our agriculture sector which is making our farmers market dependent for seeds. These hi-breed seeds need to support with specific branded fertilizer and pesticides for getting expected output those are also prescribed from respective companies. So considering the crisis, can we tell that whether we pushing our farmers towards suicide like India?

4. We are loosing our arable lands due to unplanned urbanization and river erosion, but in another; increasing trend of population is also create a new pressure to increase food production. In this situation we feel need to save and effective and planned use of our agriculture lands which is yet to be planned.

5. This is a universal truth that, our rural women are engrossed in all sphere of agriculture sector. This culture is happening very much traditionally and if we want to really increase the agro production needs to more strengthen the role of women indeed. In the same way we have to ensure equal wage for women, because a large portion of women are working in agriculture those are depriving from real wage. Government will have to recognize the agriculture women labor as equal of man and also have to introduce legal obligation to ensure minimum and equal wage.

6. Meanwhile government has introduced employment guarantee scheme along with other social safety net program for poor. That's mean poor and hard core poor will get 100 days employment during *Monga* (Season of food crisis). This is a good initiative and we should help our government for its successful implementation. We should look after the issue where poor women are getting priority access and as well as benefited.

#### **5. Raise your voice in favor of our demands in light of food sovereignty frame work and on the eve of International Rural Woman's Day 2008**

In the context of above issues we want to discuss and draw the necessary attention from our policy makers and politicians in favor of our following demands

1. Ensure the access of rural poor women as increasing rate and priority basis in employment guarantee scheme.
2. Revive and strengthen the seed producing and marketing section of BADC. Government has to take necessary initiatives for seed production and preservation at all district level and also expand the training and motivational program on this issue. Mass people have to aware on bad effect of ho-breed seeds.
3. Ensured equal wages structure for all men and women in agriculture sector introduce of legal rules.
4. Introduce the necessary legal rules and protect the rights of share croppers.
5. Government have to take necessary policy initiatives to save the agriculture lands. In light of this policy unproductive use of agriculture lands have to stop.
6. Government has to ensure woman's participation in policy making process through formulation of law and policies at local and national level.
7. Women contribution in all spheres in agriculture will have to recognize and work for upcoming development activities.

Our demand can not be confined on the above issues in context of food sovereignty. We have to keep aware that, our farmers would never be deprived from their rights to survive in the name of agriculture development and commercialization. We should also be more careful to protect our health and natures.

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