

# **Agriculture friendly budget: Allocation to promote local seeds is needed Agriculture has to be protected from aggression of foreign seeds**

## **1. Agriculture in Bangladesh economy**

Bangladesh is a country of about 160 million people with just 55,000 square miles of land. The number of population is increasing while the space to harbor that increasing number of population is remaining the same. In the economy of Bangladesh mainly depended on the agriculture makes the land a hugely scarce resource? It is estimated that, in Bangladesh per capita cultivated land is only 12.5 decimals and every year about one 1% of farm land in the country is being converted to non-agricultural uses. Country's annual loss of rice production is also estimated to be between 0.86 and 1.16%. It is making the food security situation vulnerable. To coup with the situation, to increase the food productions various measures have been taken. In the name of modern technologies some lethal technologies have also been included. Aggression of foreign seeds from multi-national companies is going on. Even though production can be increased with the local seeds the agriculture of Bangladesh is becoming dependent on MNCs day by day. We don't have any objection to accept foreign seeds which is suitable and profitable for a sustainable agriculture, but control of that seeds must goes with our farmers. On the other hand introduction of foreign seeds without proper research and examination will be definitely

### **Public and private sector in the seed management**

Total demand for all types of seeds in Bangladesh is 1150000 ton. Demand for potato and paddy seeds are 550000 and 350000 ton respectively. Public and private sector are distributing 610000 ton of seeds which is 53% of total demand. Farmers collect the remaining seeds from various informal sources. BADC, the sole public agency to distribute seeds, can supply 150000 ton seeds. Private companies supply almost 90% of the hybrid rice seed and they supply almost the 100% of the vegetable seeds. But once upon a time BADC used to occupy almost all the formal seeds distribution. In 2005-06 season BADC supplied 88.5% of total seed distributed formally, but in 2007-08 it decreased at 83%. In the private sector 176 companies are marketing seeds.

suicidal for our agriculture.

## **2. We demand self-reliant agriculture and farmer friendly budget**

Our agriculture suffers from various types of problems, so recommendations can also be lot. In this position paper we would like to focus on one specific issue rather than discussing a lot of issues. We would like to focus on the issue of seeds. We have premonitions of serious threats in this sector. We believe that our agriculture will suffer a lot if effective initiatives are not taken now.

### **2.1 Capacity of BADC must be enhanced**

#### **2.1.1 Government is providing policy supports to weaken the BADC!**

Bangladesh Agricultural Development Corporation (BADC) has been contributing a lot to the development of the agriculture of Bangladesh. It has been playing significant role in bringing technologies and quality seeds to the doors of the farmers. But unfortunately BADC has been weakened in various ways with various master plans. There are allegations that, different governments have been taking various measure to weaken BADC according to the instructions from the World Bank and IMF as a strategy of cutting subsidy for agriculture. Governments have even been providing policy support to do that. The seed policy of 1993 is an example of such intention. The paragraph no 11.2.2 (b) of the policy says that, BADC will stop producing seeds that are being produced by private companies. The paragraph no 11.2.5 says that, BADC will withdraw its upazila (sub district) based selling centers and these will be replaced by private companies.

We strongly believe that, capacities of BADC both in seed production and monitoring of the seed distribution of the private companies must be enhanced. Therefore we demand special allocation for policy, infrastructural and technical development of the BADC.

#### **2.1.2. Curtail in employment should be revisited**

In the year of 2002 total 1604 regular labour of BADC were forced to leave BADC with a

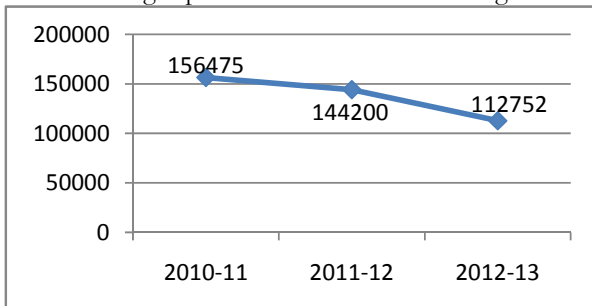
Golden Hand Shake. The then government made the curtail in the name of reducing operational cost of the organization. In fact it was a breach of the role and policy that used to control the recruitment and others of the labours of BADC. The due process was not followed and some dues of those laborers were not cleared. It is in fact yet to be cleared. Now there is no regular labour in BADC. Agriculture, specially seeds production needs intensive and regular care, without regular labour it is not possible. We would like to recommend for recruitment of more appropriate number of labour and to regularize the present irregular labour.

BADC cannot be a profitable organization; subsidies must be there to run the organization successfully for the sake of the agriculture. Subsidy for BADC is not subsidy; it is in fact an investment. We are hereby recommending more investment for this organization.

**2.1.3 Seeds distribution of BADC is decreasing; Budget allocation is needed for enhancing the capacity.**

For various reasons the seeds distribution of BADC has been decreased. In 2011-2012 BADC distributed 156475 ton of seeds, in 2012-13 it distributed 112752 ton seeds to the farmers. Thus, BADC's part of the total formal seeds distribution is only 24.59 % . . We think that, contribution of BADC in the seed sector must be increased. Since the quality of BADC seeds are good and it is a non-profit organization. On the other hand Private companies are in the market for profit. Thus price of seeds from the private sector is much more than that of BADC. So we would like to recommend special allocation to enhance BADC participation in the seeds market.

BADC is internationally recognized for producing quality seeds. Even then, giving priorities to promote private sector rather than enhancing capacities of BADC cannot be good



for the agriculture. We would like see effective initiatives to enhance capacities of BADC. Recruiting appropriate human resources, enhancing capacities of BADC in producing and distributing quality seeds will definitely be blessings for the agriculture of Bangladesh.

**2.2 We recommend expansion of local seeds and protection of farmers**

To meet the increasing demand our farmers have been taking various technologies and measures. Some of these technologies and measures have been recognized as threat to our agriculture. Experts opine that, hybrid and GMO seeds are examples of those serious threats to our agriculture. Hybrid and GMO are creating threats to our agriculture biodiversity.

The history of introduction of Hybrid seeds in Bangladesh is a bit saddening. There are so far many sad examples of devastating loss of our farmers from the hybrid seeds. Hybrid seeds cultivation is costly, it needs proper care according to set guideline, it needs fertilizer and others in a specific proportion which is very hard to maintain by our farmers. Most dangerous thing about hybrid seeds is that, there is no control of farmers on these; rather hybrid seeds are controlled fully by the companies. Dependence of our agriculture on the seed companies are being increased, which is very dangerous for our agriculture. In Bangladesh monitoring of the seed distribution by the private sector is yet to get a desired level. There are many allegations against the seed companies of breaching policies and conditions seeds import and distribution at the farmers' level.

So we would like to recommend budget allocation for public sector to enhance seed production and distribution. Monitoring on the private sector must be strengthened. We would like to recommend strong policies, rules and conditions in seed import. Strong monitoring must be ensured on the production, marketing and output of the foreign seeds.

**2.2.2 We don't want GMO, Bt Brinjal**

There are huge controversies over GMO across the world. Controversies on the Bt Brinjal are huge also. The development of Bt brinjal was first made in India, but it is still not allowed there. But Bangladesh government has approved Bt Brinjal in Bangladesh. It has been found that Bt brinjal is not safe for health. Some reports say that, in an internal research it

has been found that Bt Brinjal is not safe for rat. It create various hazards for its lever, reproductive health etc.

It has been claimed that Bt Brinjal will decrease usage of pesticides that has been hugely used in traditional brinjal cultivation in Bangladesh. But this claim is very poor logically since there are evidence that, using various environment friendly methods can reduce pesticides for Brinjal cultivation. There was concern over the ownership of the seeds of brinjal. The government authorities had been claiming that, farmers will be the owner of the seeds, But it has been revealed that, according to the agreement between the seed developer company and Bangladesh government patent rights will be remained with the company not with farmers. This is a serious concern for farmers.

So we would like to recommend revisiting the decision regarding Bt brinjal and decision should be taken keeping the welfare of the farmers and agriculture of Bangladesh in mind.

### **3. Compensation for farmers for any damage for using inputs must be ensured**

Often we find news on damage of farmers for using various seeds or other inputs from different companies. But so far, there is no legal protection for the farmers to get any sorts of compensation. There is no laws or policies in Bangladesh under what farmers can seek compensation if they even deceived by any companies.

We would like to strongly demand legal protection for the farmers. Our neighboring country has such provision. District farmers' forum can calculate the compensation and can collect those form the companies.

#### **Participating Organization**

Bangladesh Krishok Federation, Bangladesh Bhumihin Samity, Bangladesh Agricultural Farm labour Federation, Labour Resource Center, Kendrio Krishok Moitri, Bangladesh Kishani Shova, Bangaldesh Krishak Federation (8 organization) and COAST Trust.

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