

Minister
for quick
implementation
of GAP

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Agriculture Minister Muhammad Abdur Razzaque yesterday called for quick implementation of Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) to increase export of farm produce.

The GAP is a “collection of principles to apply for on-farm production and post-production processes, resulting in safe and healthy food and non-food agriculture products, while taking into account economic, social and environmental sustainability”, according to the Food and Agriculture Organization.

Of the many government steps already taken to increase the exports, the formulation of the GAP Policy 2020 is one, Razzaque told a virtual meeting of a steering committee on the

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policy’s implementation.

Officials, farmers, exporters and other stakeholders need to be involved and trained, he said.

Pilot projects or experiments need to be initiated on a priority basis focusing areas from where vegetables and fruits are most likely to be exported, he added.

Stressing on the policy’s implementation, Agriculture Secretary Md Saidul Islam, presiding over the meeting, said agriculture can be made profitable through export-oriented farming.

“The GAP must be complied with to enter the international market for agricultural products. With this in mind, we are working hard to implement this policy. Implementation work is in progress,” he said.

Officials concerned highlighted the implementation progress.

They informed that led by Bangladesh Agricultural Research Council, responsibility has already been delegated institutionally by formulating a time-bound action plan while technical and certification committees comprising various stakeholders have been formed.



Onion being packed in sacks at Sujanagar Haat in Pabna’s Sujanagar upazila last week.

PHOTO: STAR

Pabna farmers eyeing bumper onion cultivation

Growers using their own seeds to save production costs

AHMED HUMAYUN KABIR TOPU, Pabna

Md Kamruzzaman, an onion farmer of Durgapur village in Pabna’s Sujanagar upazila, is enjoying a good turn of fortune as he cut production costs by using his own seeds.

Kamruzzaman has already cultivated onion on 11 bighas of land this year with hybrid varieties being grown on two bighas.

He now plans to cultivate the popular kitchen item on another five bighas after harvesting the Kondo variety (Mulkata Piaj) in mid-January.

“I cultivated onions on just 10 bighas of land last year, when each kilogramme of seed cost as much as Tk 8,000, which was 30 per cent more compared to the year before, due to supply shortages in early winter,” Kamruzzaman said.

After enduring this bitter experience where production costs shaved his profits to a bare minimum, he decided to produce his own seeds. Now, he is getting bumper yields while saving on production costs too.

Kamruzzaman is not alone though as many other farmers like him in the area have started cultivating onions with their own seeds.

Last year, 6.35 lakh tonnes of onion were cultivated on 44,030 hectares of land and the same amount has been set as this year’s target, according to officials of the Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE).

“We aim to grow onions on 44,030 hectares of land in Pabna using local seeds and expect to get a production of 6.35 lakh tonnes as a result,” said Md Idris Ali, deputy

Last year, 6.35 lakh tonnes of onion were cultivated on 44,030 hectares of land in Pabna. This year, a target has been set to produce 6.35 lakh tonnes of the popular kitchen item on the same amount of land. Onions have already been cultivated on about 31,250 hectares as of December 31 and the sowing will continue well into January.

assistant agriculture officer of the district’s DAE office.

“Onion cultivation has made remarkable progress considering the cross cultivation target,” he added.

Onions have already been cultivated on about 31,250 hectares of land in the district as of December 31 and the sowing will continue well into January.

Besides, many farmers will plant other varieties of onion after harvesting the Kondo variety.

Kondo variety onions are grown between October and November.

Last year, 9,305 hectares of land in Pabna were used to grow 11,305 tonnes of the Kondo variety onion.

This year, 8,405 hectares of land in the region have been brought under Kondo

variety cultivation with 70 per cent, or 1.10 lakh tonnes, having already been harvested, Ali said.

But despite the bumper production, farmers are disappointed by the poor market price of new onions.

“Last year, I sold each maund (37 kilogrammes) of Kondo onion for Tk 1,700 to Tk 1,800. This year, each maund is being sold for Tk 1,150 to Tk 1,200,” said Md Nasir Uddin, a farmer of Chor Gorgori village in Ishwardi upazila.

Md Abdur Rashid, a trader based in the Sujanagar wholesale market, said there is an adequate supply of local onions in the domestic market while huge stocks of imported onions are also available.

“So, onion prices fell this year. But if imports stop, prices will increase,” he added.

Farmers claimed that since they cannot stock their Kondo onions at home as they easily rot, they are often compelled to sell them at lower prices.

Md Mizanur Rahman, deputy director of the DAE office in Pabna, said although prices have fallen this year, farmers will still make a profit because of bumper yields and lower production costs.

“After experiencing last year’s crisis, most farmers in Pabna prepared onion seeds and pulps themselves to save huge production costs,” he said.

Over 53,000 hectares of land in Pabna will be used to cultivate onion this year with an estimated production target of 7.5 lakh tonnes.

“But since production may exceed the target, farmers will be able to make a profit,” Rahman added.

Rethinking the future of shopping

ARIJIT CHAKRABORTI

The behaviour displayed by shoppers has changed rapidly over the last three years. Global consumer behaviour was evolving to live by the micro-moments three years ago.

Consumers already expressed their desire to know more about a product or service before purchasing. PwC’s Global Consumers Insights Survey 2018 identified some of these evolving behaviours and how the increase in smartphone and internet usage shaped those patterns.

The pandemic has rapidly changed consumer behaviour in the last two years. Most countries issued stay-at-home orders for a significant duration of 2020, resulting in scaled down operations of retail stores. At the same time, online purchasing of goods and services increased significantly.

To understand this rapidly changing consumer behaviour, PwC conducted multiple pulse surveys in 2021 and generated insights from them.

The survey conducted between July–December 2021 revealed some of the most recent behavioural changes along with the optimism among shoppers despite headwinds in many economies and the fear of another variant of the virus emerging. The survey covered 9,370 individuals spread across 26 countries.

The increase in the number of vaccinated individuals improved the optimism to a great extent.

Amongst those who were surveyed, 66 per cent of the partially or fully vaccinated individuals as well as 43 per cent of the unvaccinated individuals expressed their optimism about the future.

The option of flexible working has also boosted consumer optimism. They now prefer a hybrid model of working compared to only work from home or offices/locations. This optimism about the future is also related to consumer willingness to spend more in the coming months.

The historic rise of smartphone usage for shopping is another notable development.

As per the PwC survey, 41 per cent of the respondents said that they shop daily or weekly using their mobiles or smartphones compared to 39 per cent six months ago and 12 per cent five years ago. This has been a rising trend over the last five years and is expected to continue, particularly fuelled by smartphone proliferation and data connectivity in emerging countries like Bangladesh, India, Vietnam and others.

For example, 53 per cent of the respondents from India said that they shop daily or weekly using their mobiles or smartphones. The number went up to 69 per cent for the individuals surveyed in Vietnam.

The number of people resuming their visits to physical stores is gradually increasing. Lockdowns and the fear of infection had reduced physical store visits significantly. As per the PwC survey, 47 per cent of the respondents said that they visit physical stores every week.

Earlier, cash-affluent shoppers lacking time to physically visit stores started using mobile phones and online channels for shopping. Online shopping gradually found favour with more people as it saved time and increased convenience.

The pandemic compelled a significant section of shoppers across demography to opt for online shopping. At the same time, the stay-at-home restrictions and work from home options allowed cash-affluent consumers to become time-affluent as well. This has resulted in their willingness to know more about the products and services that they are buying today.

What emerged as a micro-moment for

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Oil prices jump over Kazakhstan unrest

AFP, London

Unrest in OPEC+ member Kazakhstan has pushed up oil prices as investors fear supply interruptions, but the uranium market appears less affected despite the Central Asian country being the world’s second largest producer.

“Riots obviously can stop production and exports,” said Bjarne Schieldrop, an analyst at Swedish bank SEB.

Over the week, crude prices gained about five percent and on Friday Brent exceeded \$83 per barrel, “putting it at its highest level since the price slide triggered by the first appearance of the Omicron variant in late November,” said Carsten Fritsch, commodities analyst at Commerzbank.

Protests spread across the country of 19 million this week in outrage over a New Year increase in prices for liquid petroleum gas (LPG), which many use to fuel cars.

Thousands took to the streets in Almaty and in the western province of Mangystau in protests that broadened to include anti-government slogans.

Violence erupted when police fired tear gas and stun grenades at thousands protesting in Almaty on Tuesday.

The next day protesters stormed government buildings, setting them ablaze, and a nationwide state of

emergency was declared.

Kazakh president Kassym-Jomart Tokayev on Friday rejected calls for talks with protesters after days of unprecedented unrest, authorising his forces to shoot to kill without warning.

The country is the largest oil producer in central Asia with a twelfth of the world’s proven reserves, according to the US Energy Information Administration (EIA). Kazakhstan produced around 1.8 million barrels a day in 2020.

The country is also the second largest oil producer in the OPEC+ group of top oil producers, behind Russia.

Hydrocarbons made up 21 per cent of its GDP in 2020, according to the World Bank. Production by Tengizchevroil, the largest oil venture in Kazakhstan, “has been temporarily adjusted as a result of protests at the Tengiz field”, said Stephen Brennock of PVM brokerage.

But several analysts said there was no indication that oil production had been seriously affected. On Friday, production at the country’s top three fields was “said to be continuing”, said Brennock.

“Unrest in Kazakhstan is bullish in the short-term,” said Neil Wilson, an analyst at Markets.com. At close of trading on Friday, crude oil prices had fallen slightly, with Brent falling 0.28 per cent to \$81.76 and West Texas Intermediate down 0.54 per cent to \$79.03.



Passers-by take pictures of a burnt-out fire engine in central Almaty on January 7 after unprecedented unrest in the Central Asian nation due to a hike in energy prices.

PHOTO: AFP