



A farmer is seen tending to his bottle gourd plants, which were grown following good agricultural practices, in Shahbajpur village of Jashore sadar upazila.
PHOTO: MOKAMMEL SHUVO

Farmers grow export quality vegetables but don't get buyers

MOKAMMEL SHUVO, back from Jashore

Farmers in Shahbajpur village of Jashore sadar upazila are overjoyed to be producing export quality vegetables but they are disappointed that the produce is selling at home instead of abroad at the same time.

Farmers in the region are growing vegetables following good agricultural practices (GAP) and so, many have received GlobalGAP certification, which allows them to sell their produce in high-value markets all over the globe.

GlobalGAP aims to ensure safe, sustainable agriculture worldwide by setting up voluntary standards for the certification of such products.

"We are producing safe vegetables but we don't have enough buyers even though the yields are export quality," said Oilar Rahman, a farmer of Shahbajpur.

"We can produce enough quantities of pesticide-free vegetables for both export and the local market but we lack demand," Rahman added.

According to Monirul Islam, another farmer of the village, they prefer selling vegetables for export as it earns them an extra Tk 3-5 per kilogramme (kg).

"So, we want the government and private entrepreneurs to arrange for our vegetables to be exported," Islam said.

Like Rahman and Islam, around 48 other farmers of Shahbajpur have been eagerly waiting to send their produce abroad ever since receiving GlobalGAP certifications in March for seven vegetables, namely bottle gourd, green chili, papaya, arum, green beans, pointed gourd and spine gourd.

"GlobalGAP certified fruits and vegetables can be sold at super shops



Growers use pheromone traps for insects rather than pesticides.

in EU and the US at higher prices," said Mahadi Hasan, head of business at Shwapno, a renowned retail brand in Bangladesh.

But even the vegetables and fruits that do manage to make their way abroad are sold in Bangladeshi specialty shops or at very low market value, he added.

ACI Logistics, which owns and operates Shwapno, initiated a project with the support of USAID in 2017 with 200 farmers in Shahbajpur to produce safe vegetables following GAP.

Now, they have some 600 members, 50 of whom have been certified by GlobalGAP for the next one year, Hasan said.

He went on to say that it costs around Tk 32 lakhs to earn GlobalGAP certification for the seven types of vegetables being produced by those 50 farmers.

"We are buying around 700-800 kgs of safe vegetables of different varieties every day from those farmers and sell them at Shwapno outlets," the ACI official said.

"It took a few years to set up the whole protocol for growing safe vegetables but now we are focusing on establishing links between growers and exporters," Hasan added.

"The price of vegetables exported to high-value markets will be 60 per cent higher than the current prices."

Torup Ali, one of the 50 GlobalGAP certified farmers, alleged that Shwapno buys very small amounts of vegetables considering their production capacity.

"We are producing quality vegetables but not getting the higher prices that they deserve," he said.

However, Hasan argued that Shwapno sells around 70 vegetable items through its 56 outlets in the country and that farmers in Shahbajpur only produce seven of them.

Regarding the procedure for growing safe vegetables, farmers say they use less chemical fertilisers.

"We also use pheromone traps and yellow sticky traps for insects," Ali said.

Islam of Shahbajpur said local farmers sprayed pesticides three times a week in the past.

"Now, we follow expert advice and spray pesticides only once a week on certain vegetable fields and not only is this safer, but it reduces costs as well," he said, adding that they stop applying pesticides at least one or two weeks ahead of harvesting.

During a recent visit to the village, this correspondent found a host of growers producing safe vegetables that all want the relevant authority to initiate exports in order to secure better profits.

"We have started working with the farmers and USAID to export the GlobalGAP certified vegetables to the EU and US," said Mohammed Mansur, general secretary of the Bangladesh Fruits, Vegetables and Allied Products Exporters' Association.

"The price would be 30 to 35 percent higher than the current export price if we could export GlobalGAP certified vegetables to high-value markets like Walmart," he added.

Banks serving RMG to remain open on July 8, 9

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Banks have been asked to keep their branches that serve the readymade garment industry in Dhaka city, Ashulia, Tongi, Gazipur, Savar, Bhaluka, Narayanganj and Chattogram open for full-day on July 8 and 9.

In a notice yesterday, the Bangladesh Bank said banks would have to take measures to keep the branches open in order to allow garment factories to sell their export bills and clear the payments and bonuses to their workers and officials ahead of Eid-ul-Azha, to be observed on July 10.

The clearing system of the central bank will remain open on the days. Banks, however, can't submit any cheques for clearing from the branches that are not located in the areas cited in the circular.

Stocks snap gaining streak

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Stocks broke out of a gaining streak of four days while turnover at the market dropped 30 per cent yesterday.

The DSEX, the benchmark index of the premier bourse in Bangladesh, lost 17 points or 0.26 per cent, to reach 6,359 yesterday.

Turnover at Dhaka Stock Exchange (DSE) plunged 30 per cent to Tk 654 crore. It was Tk 937 crore a day earlier.

The short-term profit-booking tendency of cautious investors brought down the broad index, said International Leasing Securities in its daily market review.

Meanwhile, the central bank increased the repo rate by 50 basis points, which may adversely impact the money flow to the capital market, therefore the index dropped, it said.

Investors' participation was significantly lower in the market, so the turnover decreased, it added.

Meanwhile, both the DS30, the blue chip index, and DSES, the Shariah-based index, lost 4.38 points and 2.03 points respectively.

As the index was undergoing a rising trend for the previous four days, some investors tried to rake in profits and that is why the index dropped, said a merchant banker preferring anonymity.

Moreover, recent steps of the central bank also encouraged them to sell shares apprehending a cash crunch in the stock market, he said.

Out of 382 issues traded during the session, 219 declined, 120 advanced and 43 remained unchanged.

Among the sectors, paper rose 3.8 per cent, services 2.1 per cent and IT 1.5 per cent, whereas tannery dropped 1.4 per cent, ceramic 1 per cent and banks 0.8 per cent.

Based on the turnover, investors' activities were mainly focused on the textile sector, accounting for 11 per cent of the day's total turnover, followed by fuel & power (9.6 per cent) and miscellaneous (9.4 per cent).

Robi Axiata gained the most, 9.96 per cent. Meghna Insurance Company, Shyampur Sugar Mills, Bangladesh Thai Aluminium, and Zeal Bangla Sugar Mills were also in the gainers' list.

Fu Wang Food shed the most, dropping 2 per cent. Other than that, the most were Paper Processing & Packaging, Alltex Industries, Prime Bank and Tamijuddin Textile Mills.

Intraco Refueling Stations became the most traded stock, with shares worth Tk 36 crore changing hands, followed by Sonali Paper & Board Mills, Beximco, IPDC Finance and Robi Axiata.

China's factory activity speeds up in June

REUTERS, Beijing

China's manufacturing activity expanded at its fastest in 13 months in June, buoyed by a strong rebound in output, as the lifting of Covid lockdowns sent factories racing to meet recovering demand, a private sector poll showed on Friday.

The Caixin/Markit manufacturing purchasing managers' index (PMI) rose to 51.7 in June, also indicating the first expansion in four months, from 48.1 in the previous month. That was well above analysts' expectations for an up-tick to 50.1.

The 50-point index mark separates growth from contraction on a monthly basis.

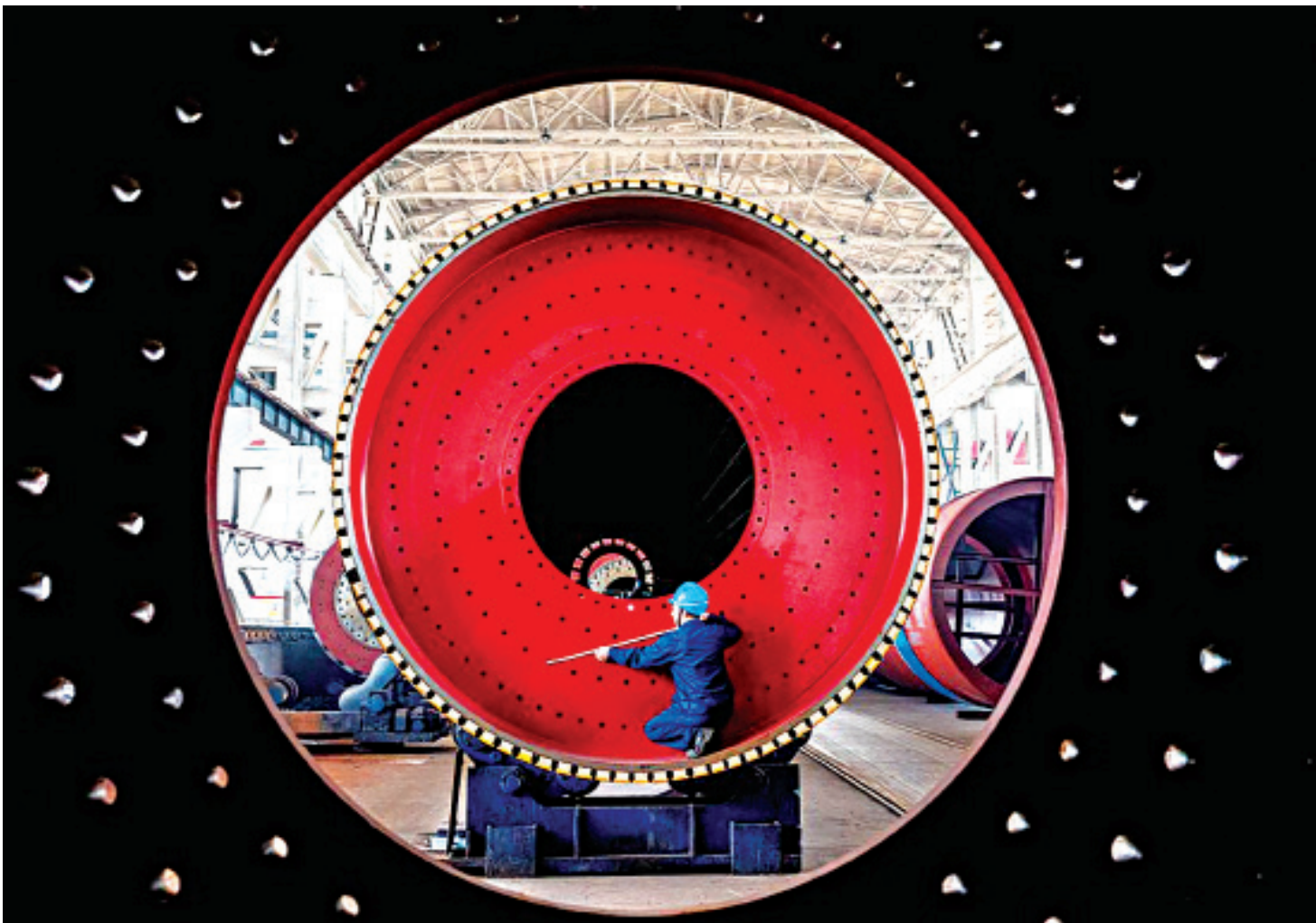
The recovery suggested in the Caixin survey, which focused on more export-oriented and small firms in coastal regions, was more convincing compared with findings in an official survey.

Economic activity has sped up in June since various Covid lockdowns have been rolled back as Covid-19 cases fell, with a range of support measures unveiled by the State Council in late May to stabilise growth gradually kicking in.

A sub-index for output bounced to the highest level since November 2020, while new orders, bolstered by the first increase in export orders in about a year, snapped three months of decline and posted the fastest growth in four months.

Delivery times for suppliers stabilised in June amid

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An employee measures a newly manufactured ball mill machine at a factory in Nantong, Jiangsu province, China. Economic activity in China has sped up in June since various Covid lockdowns have been rolled back as Covid-19 cases fell.

PHOTO: REUTERS/FILE

Ukraine begins electricity exports to EU

AFP, Kyiv

Ukraine has started exporting electricity to the European Union, via Romania, President Volodymyr Zelensky said, as Russia reduces gas supplies to the bloc which is supporting Kyiv in resisting Moscow's invasion.

Several European countries, including Italy and Germany, are highly reliant upon Russian gas for their energy needs but have been forced to look for alternatives as Moscow slashes deliveries.

Speaking Thursday, Zelensky said Ukraine had "launched a significant export of electricity to the territory of the EU, via Romania."

"This is only the first stage. We are preparing to increase supply." He said that "a significant part of the Russian gas consumed by Europeans can be replaced."

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