

Sugarcane production on the decline

MIRZA SHAKIL

Sugarcane production and acreages in Bangladesh have more than halved in the last two decades as farmers find it difficult to generate a steady stream of profit from the crop, official figures showed.

The production stood at 67.42 lakh tonnes in the fiscal year of 2000-01, but it fell to 33.33 lakh tonnes in 2020-21, according to the Bangladesh Economic Review 2022.

During the period, the acreage under cultivation dropped to 1.92 lakh acres from more than 4.17 lakh acres.

In FY21, sugarcane production fell nearly 10 per cent from a year ago. Some 36.83 lakh tonnes of sugarcane were grown in FY2019-20 in 2.13 lakh acres of land.

In Tangail, sugarcane farming has gone down this year from a year ago. As a result, the target set by the Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE) could not be achieved.

According to the DAE in the district, a goal to grow sugarcane on 500 hectares of land was set for the ongoing season with a view to producing 23,600 tonnes of sugar.

However, the crop has been cultivated on 388 hectares of land, according to Nargis Akter, a sub-assistant agriculture officer of the state-run agency in the district.

The crop was cultivated on 422 hectares of land last year, producing 20,256 tonnes of sugarcane.

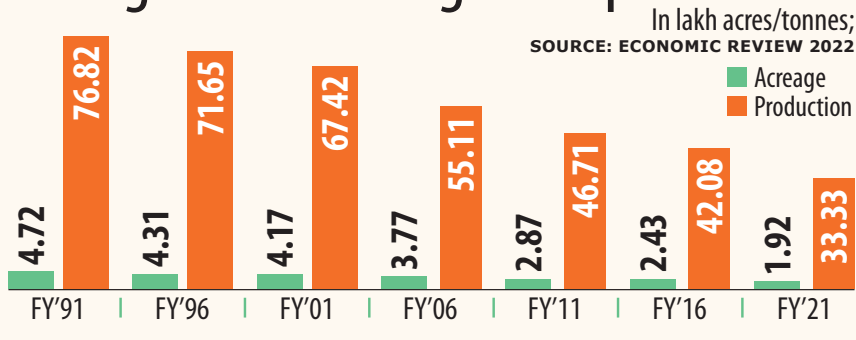
In the sadar upazila, the DAE had targeted to cultivate sugarcane on 250 hectares of land to produce 11,800 tonnes of the crop. Finally, it has been grown on 160 hectares.

Ziaur Rahman, upazila agriculture officer in Tangail sadar, attributed the fear of floods to the lower cultivation. Farmers cultivated maize, paddy and vegetables in place of sugarcane.

"The yield has, however, improved compared to last year thanks to favourable weather conditions. Farmers are also getting higher prices as demand for sugarcane sticks has increased among



Sugarcane acreage and production



consumers," he said.

Sugarcane cultivation is also more profitable than other crops since crops such as oil seeds, spices and lentils, and vegetables can be cultivated alongside it as associated crops, officials say, adding that the cultivation of associated crops can help offset losses partially if sugarcane is damaged by any natural disasters.

During a visit to several sugarcane fields in the sadar and Ghatail upazilas, it was seen that the harvesting of the crop was going on.

Wholesalers from Tangail and adjacent districts were found to be collecting

sugarcane sticks from the fields. They will send them to various parts of the country, including Dhaka, through trucks.

Amzad Hossain, a farmer in Silimpur village in Tangail sadar upazila, has cultivated sugarcane on 55 decimals of land this year spending Tk 80,000. He has sold sugarcane worth Tk 1.5 lakh.

"Besides, I have cultivated tomato, potato, and garlic on the same field as associated crops," he said.

In the past, Kader Miah, another farmer in the same area, cultivated Aman paddy on his 14 decimals of land and was able to recoup the farming costs.

He cultivated sugarcane on the same land last year and incurred losses due to floods.

"I cultivated sugarcane this year and made a profit of Tk 15,000," he said.

During a visit to the Dharerbari market in the sadar upazila recently, it was found that a stick of sugarcane is being sold at Tk 20 to Tk 40.

Ershad Miah, a villager, said he had bought eight sticks of sugarcane for his family members at Tk 270.

Several farmers have sought support from the government to give a boost sugarcane cultivation in the area and bring more land under the cultivation of the crop.

"Local sugarcane farmers incurred huge losses due to damages caused by the floods last year but none from the agriculture department came forward to provide us any help," said Jinnat Miah, a farmer in Dhitpur village in the sadar upazila.

He cultivated the crop on three and a half bighas of land last year at a cost of Tk 70,000. But all of his crops were damaged by the floods.

"So, I did not cultivate any sugarcane this year," he said.

Ahsanul Bashar, deputy director of the DAE in Tangail, says sugarcane cultivation has not hit the target in the district as farmers who suffered losses for floods last year did not grow the crop this year.

This year, a couple of new varieties of sugarcane, namely BSRI-41 and 42, were planted in the district alongside the local varieties, he said.

"The agriculture department has given necessary advice to local farmers, including on how to save the crop from any pest attack."

Amid persisting losses, the government in 2020 shut six sugar mills: Setabganj Sugar Mill in Dinajpur, Panchagarh Sugar Mill, Shyampur Sugar Mill in Badarganj upazila of Rangpur, Pabna Sugar Mill, Kushtia Sugar Mill, and Rangpur Sugar Mill.

Currently, nine state-run mills produce sugar by crushing sugarcane.

Transcom unveils ROWA TV brand

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Transcom Electronics Limited (TEL), a leading retailer and distributor, has launched a new branded television in Bangladesh in partnership with Chinese electronics company TCL.

The two companies unveiled "ROWA Television" at an event in the Radisson Blu hotel in Dhaka on Thursday in presence of distributors and dealers, according to a press release.

The event was attended by, among others, Arshad Huq, managing director of TEL, Huang Luolin (Rolin), service director of TCL India, Shohab Md Asaduzzaman, head of business at TEL, Wenchao Su, industrial support manager of TCL, and Md Ripon Miah, sales manager of TCL Bangladesh.

ROWA Television, which offers Google Play Store facilities, will be available across the country from next week. Thanks to Play Store, around 7,000 applications will be available where viewers can enjoy more than 7 lakh movies and TV series episodes, according to the companies.



"This is the first branded TV in the country to have a direct licence agreement with Google," said Shohab Md Asaduzzaman while making a presentation on the product and its distribution.

"We will distribute it through three channels -- Transcom Digital outlets, exclusive dealers, and distributors -- across the country. The TV can be operated by voice instruction."

The TV will come in two models: S52 and U62. The S52 model has two sizes, namely 32 inches and 43 inches, while the U62 model has four sizes: 43", 50", 55" and 65".

Speaking at the event, Arshad Huq said, "For Transcom, this is a new era."

"From here, Bangladeshi consumers will not only get the top products with the latest technologies but also they can buy them at affordable prices."

He went on to say that Transcom has started to invest in the manufacturing sector.

Its primary investment began two years

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Farmers plant saplings in a rice field on the outskirts of Ahmedabad, the largest city in the western state of Gujarat, India.

PHOTO: REUTERS/FILE

India may curb export of 100pc broken rice

REUTERS, Mumbai

India, the world's biggest rice exporter, is considering whether to restrict exports of 100 per cent broken rice, government and industry officials told Reuters on Friday, after the paddy area has been reduced by a lack of rainfall.

The potential export curbs could lift rice prices globally because India accounts for more than 40 per cent of the world's rice shipments. It could also hit a few poor African countries that import 100 per cent broken rice for human consumption, though that variety is mainly used for feed purposes.

"We have been discussing whether we need some sort of curbs on 100 per cent broken rice exports," said a senior government official involved in the decision process.

India is more than comfortable in terms of both private and government rice stocks, so there is no point considering any curb on overall rice exports, the official

said, adding that the discussions are confined to broken rice.

The state-run Food Corporation of India held 41 million tonnes of milled and rice paddy stocks as of Aug. 1, far above the government's requirement of 13.5 million tonnes by July 1.

Below-average rainfall in key rice-producing states such as West Bengal, Bihar and Uttar Pradesh prompted the latest discussions in a country that has already banned wheat exports and restricted sugar shipments this year.

India's farmers have planted paddy on 34.37 million hectares, down 8.3 per cent from a year ago, farm ministry data showed last week. India usually exports 5 per cent and 25 per cent broken rice, but demand for 100 per cent broken rice has risen sharply in recent months, particularly from drought-hit China, exporters said.

"The local cattle feed industry has been demanding a restriction on exports of 100 per cent broken

so they can have more supplies," said one exporter based in Andhra Pradesh.

In 2021 India exported 21.5 million tonnes of rice, including 3.6 million tonnes of broken rice.

China was the biggest buyer of broken rice, with purchases of 1.1 million tonnes in 2021, while African countries such as Senegal and Djibouti bought broken rice for human consumption.

"Instead of banning, the government should impose duty on the exports. This will help India keep a presence in the market and allow African countries to import," said BV Krishna Rao, president of the All India Rice Exporters Association.

The price difference between 100 per cent broken and 5 per cent broken has dropped to \$15 a tonne from more than \$70 a year ago, exporters said. India's 5 per cent broken white rice was quoted around \$340 a tonne this week, against \$325 for 100 per cent broken white rice, they said.

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