

# ‘To avoid rice shortage, markets must function well’

Dr Mohammad Jahangir Alam, professor at the Department of Agribusiness and Marketing of Bangladesh Agricultural University (BAU), discusses his latest research on the country’s rice production with Anupam Debashis Roy of The Daily Star.

**Certain media reports have suggested there may be a shortfall in this year’s rice production. Is that really the case?**

We haven’t reported that we will have a shortage of rice in our research, which was jointly conducted by the Bangladesh Rice Research Institute (BRRI), International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) and Bangladesh Agricultural University. We analysed data only till Boro season this year, without taking the Aman season into account. Our calculation was based on the last three seasons, and we found that we had 36.77 million metric tonnes of production. Also, our preliminary results showed that human food consumption demand in the country was 26.184 million metric tonnes and non-food consumption was 6.435 million metric tonnes, which means we are supposed to have a surplus of 3.458 million metric tonnes.

**In that case, what does your research imply about food security?**

Food security means rice security in our country’s perspective. The Aman harvest has started and about 20 percent of the total Aman crop is already harvested. Now, this year’s Aman production is projected to exceed the target. Aman production constitutes about 39 percent of the total rice production in the country. This means we don’t have any shortage. Boro contributes around 51 percent. If we can prepare a comprehensive plan on how to maintain this level of Boro production next season, we will have plenty of rice in the country, even if we don’t consider imported stocks.

However, there will be some challenges due to the fact that imports are becoming expensive and we depend on international markets for agricultural inputs such as fertilisers, a lion’s share of which was being imported from Ukraine. The government is proactively looking to other fertiliser-exporting countries such as Saudi Arabia and Canada to import urea and other fertilisers. To avoid any shortage at the household level, it has to be ensured that the markets function well. As the international markets are highly volatile, our government policies should focus on increasing the growth of major agricultural crops, including rice, at the domestic level.

**How will the production rate affect the lives of farmers who are cultivating rice? What can policymakers do right now to support them?**

The price of rice normally goes down

when there is a bumper production. The poor and marginal farmers sell paddy just after harvesting to meet their immediate cash needs, purchase inputs for the next season, cover their families’ expenses, and also because of a lack of storage facilities at the household level. For a long time, we have seen this pattern. The government procures milled rice from the millers and a tiny amount of paddy from the farmers at predetermined prices, which are supposed to be higher than the existing market price. But this



Dr Mohammad Jahangir Alam

amount is very low. The share of total procurement is less than five percent. So, what can be done? The government should increase storage capacities at the farmers’ level, for one. And then they should procure at least 20 percent of the total rice production to help farmers. Another good strategy would be selling the procured rice at low prices when there is a price hike, to keep low-income consumers’ food-secure. This will create a balance between producers’ and consumers’ interests.

**Why is the rice price so high at the consumer end? Are certain unscrupulous groups taking advantage of the situation to make profits?**

In most cases, farmers can’t sell the rice they produce directly to the consumers – especially urban consumers. There are many middlemen who are bridging producers and consumers. For example, in the rice market chain, there are as many as six actors involved. They are *foria*, *paiker*, millers, *araidar*, wholesalers and retailers, and then the rice reaches the consumers. There are many hands in the middle adding to the cost. In addition,

transportation costs and extortion are adding extra costs at every node in the value chain. There might be some big actors that influence the markets. We have found that millers make Tk 12-14 per kg of rice in the Boro season when we consider by-products and rice together, which is very high. The profit made is Tk 1.6-2.8 for wholesalers and Tk 2.7-5.6 for retailers. This happens for all agricultural commodities, particularly in developing countries, unless the whole value chain is shortened.

**What steps can be taken to ensure that there is enough rice available to the people at affordable prices? What can the government do?**

There are some obvious options. First, the government should continue supporting farmers through subsidies and ensuring availability of all agricultural inputs. This will help farmers to keep the cost of production at a reasonable level. Second, the government should ensure that the market functions well and the whole value chain performs well. No one should be able to hoard the produce and manipulate market prices. Law enforcement bodies should monitor the markets on a regular basis. Third, when there are bumper productions of rice, the government should purchase paddy directly from the farmers, at least a substantial amount, so the farmers don’t suffer due to low market prices. Fourth, the government should increase the allocation of open market sales (OMS) so that low-income consumers can purchase rice at low prices. Also, the government should coordinate the timing of imports with the rice harvest seasons.

# Mangrove forests: Nature’s frontier between life and loss

Sanjoy Roy and Sadiqun Nahar are coordinator of the Geographic Research Unit (GRU) and junior research and design associate, respectively, at the Bengal Institute for Architecture, Landscapes and Settlements in Dhaka, Bangladesh.

SANJOY ROY and SADIQUN NAHAR

Over the past few decades, apocalyptic cyclones such as Sidr, Aila and Bulbul have wreaked havoc in the southwest coastal region of Bangladesh. Even though these tropical cyclones caused significant damage to both human lives and properties, extensive devastation was prevented because the Sundarbans, the largest mangrove forest in the world, served as a defensive wall against the deadliest winds. Functioning as a natural barrier, intricate branches and leaves of the mangrove trees play a pivotal role in lowering the height of storm surges. Therefore, the existence of mangrove forests in the coastal region of any deltaic country, like Bangladesh, is an enormous blessing.

In the present era of climate change, while nations are taking collaborative initiatives and setting targets to reduce carbon emissions globally, mangrove ecosystems have been silently acting as our climate guardian by storing and sequestering a significant amount of atmospheric carbon. A report published by The World Bank shows mangroves in Indonesia store around 3.1 billion tonnes of carbon, equivalent to the amount of greenhouse gases (GHGs) released by billions of vehicles every year. Apart from curbing climate change effects, the presence of mangroves (approximately 140,000 sq km in area) in many deltaic coasts in the tropics protects coastlines by trapping sediments and preventing soils from being washed away. Bangladesh could be an excellent example here, where the shoreline is found to be less dynamic along the mangrove-dominated coast compared to the central or eastern coasts. Additionally, this particular forest protects our marine biodiversity by filtering contaminants out of the river waters before they end up in the sea.

Globally, mangrove forests are recognised as one of the most productive ecosystems, which provides a multitude of ecosystem services to coastal communities. Its diversified trees, and nutrient-rich waterways and creeks support a variety of flora and fauna, in addition to providing food provisions, raw materials for medicines, fuelwood, and lumber. There are currently 740 fish species known to have thrived in the aquatic habitats of global

mangrove forests and contribute to 30 percent of Southeast Asia’s fish catches. The Sundarbans mangrove forest in the Ganges delta hosts more than 3,000 wildlife species in its 10,000 sq km of land and waters. Among them, many species are threatened as per the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Red List. Changing of natural habitats due to climatic and anthropogenic threats have already pushed the Bengal tiger, smooth-coated otter, saltwater crocodile, and river terrapin onto the endangered category of the IUCN Red List in Bangladesh.

Considering the immense socioeconomic, cultural and environmental values of the mangrove ecosystem, the Bengal Institute for Architecture,

**Despite their many benefits, mangrove forests around the world face multiple threats today, caused by human activities, as well as climatic and hydrological changes.**

Landscapes and Settlements recently conducted extensive research on mangrove vegetation in nine major tropical deltas of the world that are located in Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, Myanmar, Vietnam, Indonesia, Tanzania, Nigeria, Venezuela and Brazil. The aim of that study was to investigate the spatial and temporal changes in mangrove areas based on satellite image analysis over a 30-year period starting from 1991. It also listed mangrove flora that are dominant in those deltas, as well as the anthropogenic and climatic threats they are confronting.

Despite a great deal of benefits mangroves provide to us, the remaining mangrove forests in different parts of the world are encountering multiple threats exerted by human activities, as well as climatic and hydrological changes. Such abnormalities have

been causing them to disappear five times faster than other forests. Scientific research shows that half of the world’s mangroves have disappeared in the last half century. Due to unplanned land use, over-extraction of provisioning services, unsustainable tourism practices, aquaculture expansions, decrease in freshwater flow, construction of power plants in mangrove vicinity, etc, deltaic mangroves are shrinking gradually.

In the Ganges, Irrawaddy and Rufiji deltas, expansion of agricultural activities, uncontrolled harvesting of resources, and excessive pollution have been major threats. Transportation of mined ore, natural gas, petroleum, chemicals, coal and other highly polluting materials through the rivers within mangrove forests, particularly in the Ganges and Indus deltas, exposes mangrove biodiversity to a tremendous risk of oil and harmful product spillage. Construction of barrages on the upper sections of the Ganges River reduces downstream discharge, which is one of the main reasons for increasing salinity in the Sundarbans. Consequently, salt-tolerant Kankra trees have been replacing Sundari trees. Mangrove biodiversity has also been struggling hard in all the deltas to adapt with climate change effects, particularly rising sea levels and warming coastal waters.

After losing much mangrove cover, global awareness grew about the conservation of this coastal guardian. Many coastal states have been implementing different management strategies to protect this valuable ecosystem from further decay. Bangladesh initiated the Mangrove Afforestation Project in the 1980s, the Coastal Greenbelt Project in 1995, and the Coastal Char Land Afforestation Project in 2005, under which extensive coastal lands were brought under mangrove plantation. To preserve mangrove wildlife in the Sundarbans, three wildlife sanctuaries were declared in 1996 under the Bangladesh Wildlife (Preservation) (Amendment) Act, 1974.

Transboundary initiatives need to be emphasised in deltas where mangroves share two different states. Such transboundary collaboration is essential for containing pollution, maintaining hydrological flow, preserving vulnerable species, and controlling wildlife trafficking. At the national level, implementation of a sustainable land-use plan and nature-based tourism can protect mangroves from further degradation.



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Memo No: 34.04.0000.002.07.292.22-2512

Date: 28 November, 2022

**e-Tender Notice (Open Tendering Method) (NCT)**

This is to notify to all concerned that the following tenders have been published through e-GP portal.


Tender/ Proposal ID No	Name of Works	Publishing & Last selling Date	Closing Date
Tender ID No- 757049	Supplying and installation of Fire Hydrant System at various buildings in Rajshahi BKSP	28-Nov-2022 at 15:00 Hr 12-Dec-2022 at 18:00 Hr	13-Dec-2022 at 15:00 Hr

The interested Firms/Persons may visit the website [www.eprocure.gov.bd](http://www.eprocure.gov.bd) to get the details of the Tender. This is an online Tender, where only e-Tender will be accepted in the National e-GP Portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted. To submit e-Tender, registration in the National e-GP Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) is required. Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP System Portal and e-GP help desk ([helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd](mailto:helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd))



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Ref. No. 12.23.0000.077.26.009.22.1530

Date: 28/11/2022

**Invitation for Tenders (IFT) for Vehicle Hiring**

1	Ministry/Division	Ministry of Agriculture
2	Agency	Bangladesh Jute Research Institute (BJRI)
3	Procuring Entity Name	Programme Director and CSO, BJRI, Manik Mia Avenue, Dhaka-1207
4	Procuring Entity Code	Not used at present
5	Procuring Entity District	Dhaka
6	Invitation For	Vehicle Hiring ( 01 No. Microbus)
7	Invitation Ref No.	12.23.0000.077.26.009.22.
8	Date	29/11/2022
9	Procurement Method	Open Tendering Method (OTM)
10	Budget and Source of Funds	Revenue Budget (GOB)
11	Development Partners (if applicable)	N/A
12	Program Code	123040201
13	Program Name	Development of Innovation Technology by the Application of Reactive dye and various types of prints (Pigment, Rubber, Foil) on jute and jute-cotton blended fabrics
14	Tender Package No.	SR-01
15	Tender Package Name	Vehicle Hiring (1 No. Microbus)
16	Tender Publication Date	29/11/2022
17	Tender Last Selling Date	12/12/2022
18	Tender Closing Date and Time	13/12/2022 12:00 PM
19	Tender Opening Date and Time	13/12/2022 12:30 PM
20	Name & Address of the office(s)Selling Tender Document (Principal)	Programme Director & CSO, Dyeing and Printing Division, Bangladesh Jute Research Institute (BJRI), Manik Mia Avenue, Dhaka-1207
21	Receiving Tender Document	Office of Programme Director & CSO, BJRI, Manik Mia Avenue, Dhaka-1207
22	Opening Tender Document	Office Programme Director, BJRI, Manik Mia Avenue, Dhaka-1207
23	Eligibility of Tenderer	Attested copies of updated Trade license, Income Tax and VAT Registration Certificate, Bank solvency certificate, Work completion certificate of similar works (i.e., Vehicle Hiring at Govt./Semi-Govt or autonomous organization), and all other relevant documents as per TDS, Tender security in the form of Bank Draft/Pay Order (original copy) should be submitted with tender.
24	Brief Description of Services	As stated in tender documents
25	Price of Tender Document (Tk.)	Tk. 1000/- (One thousand Taka) Nonrefundable
26	Amount of Tender Security(Tk.)	Tk. 15,000/- (Fifteen thousand Taka)
27	Name of Official Inviting Tender	Dr. M M Alamgir Sayeed
28	Designation of Official Inviting Tender	Programme Director and CSO, Dyeing and Printing Division
29	Address of Official Inviting Tender	BJRI, Manik Mia Avenue, Dhaka-1207.
30	Contact details of Official Inviting Tender	Tel. No. 02-48118528, Mobile No. 01913089225

N.B.: The Procuring Entity reserves the right to reject all the Tenders or annul the Tender proceedings.



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