



The production of high-value exotic fruits such as sweet oranges has increased significantly in Bangladesh in the past several years as many farmers are growing them since they yield higher profits. The photo was taken from an orchard in Lalmonirhat sadar upazila yesterday.

PHOTO: S DILIP ROY

High-value exotic fruits make a splash

Farmers show growing interest for higher profit

MD ASADUZ ZAMAN and MONG SING HAI MARMA

The production of some high-value exotic fruits in Bangladesh has increased significantly in the past several years as many farmers have jumped on the bandwagon of growing them commercially since they fetch higher profits.

Thanks to the expansion of the cultivation of the fruits, the country may cut the import of exotic fruits, which may go on to save foreign currencies.

Currently, Bangladesh depends on external sources to meet 60 per cent of its demand for fruits, which cost it around Tk 2,500 crore annually.

The high-value exotic fruits that are largely being grown in the country include dragon fruits, sweet oranges, oranges, strawberries, avocados, persimmons, rambutans, longans, and net melons, with their combined production standing at around 2.06 lakh

tonnes in the last financial year, data from the Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE) showed.

The agency also says there is a huge growth in the cultivation of the fruits across the country.

For example, the annual total production of sweet oranges, also known as malta, was 3,916 tonnes from 555 hectares of land in the fiscal year of 2014-15. Eight years later, it surged to 54,399 tonnes and the land under coverage was 6,848 hectares.

Dragon fruit cultivation stood at 851 tonnes in FY18 and it spiked more than 1,600 per cent to 13,872 tonnes.

Selim Reza, a farmer in Natore, has been cultivating dragon fruits over 13-14 bighas of land since 2012. Earlier, he used to cultivate guava and plum on the same land.

"Now I am focusing on dragon farming as it is more viable for the local environment," said Reza, who was honoured as Agricultural Important Person

by the government in 2020.

Apart from dragon fruits, Reza also cultivates avocados and rambutans along with local fruits.

His farm -- Dristanta Agro Farm and Nursery -- is spread over 25 hectares in the northern

sweet oranges. He cultivated sweet oranges on 72 decimals of land and earned around Tk 2 lakh last year.

Earlier, he used to grow paddy and maize on the land. "I turned to sweet oranges and oranges for higher profit," he said.



district.

"If farmers get proper varieties, they can make a profit of Tk 2 lakh to Tk 5 lakh per bigha from the farming of dragon fruits," Reza said.

Mohammad Nazrul Islam, a farmer in Biral upazila of Dinajpur, cultivates oranges and

The dragon fruit is produced all over Bangladesh but one-fifth of it is grown in the hilly Khagrachari, Rangamati and Bandarban districts.

In FY22, around 10,729 tonnes of sweet oranges were produced on 1,179 hectares of land in the Rangamati region, DAE data

showed.

Mong Mong Sing, a farmer in Bandarban Sadar, said: "The cultivation of dragon fruits is profitable here and the fruit grown here is tastier than those farmed in the plain land."

In the hilly areas, farmers harvest the produce for six months and sell them at Tk 150 to Tk 180 per kilogramme in the Bandarban district town. Traders then take the fruits to the markets in Chattogram, Cumilla and Dhaka.

"The interest in agriculture is increasing among the highly educated youth. They are keen to cultivate exotic agricultural products breaking conventional trends," said Mehedi Masood, deputy director of the DAE's horticulture wing.

"There is a bright prospect for high-value fruit production in Bangladesh. But the problems related to cultivation and marketing should be resolved immediately."

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Bepza moves to stop use of fake import permits

Develops customs interface, lists authorised persons

MOHAMMAD SUMAN

Bangladesh Export Processing Zones Authority (Bepza) has taken a number of steps, including connecting to customs management software, to prevent the use of fake import permits following the detection of such malpractices this year.

Import permits are issued by Bepza against every import of listed export-oriented companies for the lifting of duties.

Earlier, customs officials had to log in to the Bepza website every time they had to check the authenticity of an import permit.

Moreover, companies based inside export processing zones import goods through a one stop service which get clearance through nominal scrutiny, alleged a customs official.

Customs officials said a section of importers took advantage of these submitting fake import permits during rush hours.

In the past one and half years, at least 26 import consignments were identified by customs to have used fake import permits of 13 companies.

However, only eight of the consignments comprising liquor, cigarettes and household goods worth Tk 100 crore could be seized after

In the past one and a half years, at least 26 import consignments were identified by customs to have used fake import permits of 13 companies

their release from the port. Customs were unable to trace the rest up until now.

Among the names in the fake import permits was that of Dong Jin Industrial (BD) Company, an entity based in an export processing zone.

"We do not know who used our company's identity," Gazi Md Maqsood ur Rahim, the company's deputy general manager, told The Daily Star.

"We produce artificial hair and hair-related products for export. However, the customs documents stated that the seized liquor was declared as yarn although our factory does not need yarn," he said.

In a letter to the chairman of the National Board of Revenue (NBR) at the end of July this year, Bepza informed that forged and expired import permits of export processing zone-based companies.

A probe report of Customs House, Chattogram

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| STOCKS | |
|----------|-----------|
| DSEX ▼ | CASPI ▼ |
| 0.16% | 0.08% |
| 6,260.76 | 18,451.32 |

| COMMODITIES | |
|-------------|--------------|
| Gold ▼ | Oil ▲ |
| \$1,782.15 | \$80.47 |
| (per ounce) | (per barrel) |

| ASIAN MARKETS | | | |
|---------------|-----------|-----------|----------|
| MUMBAI | TOKYO | SINGAPORE | SHANGHAI |
| ▲ 0.15% | ▲ 0.01% | ▲ 0.22% | ▲ 0.01% |
| 62,628.38 | 28,156.21 | 3,278.57 | 3,176.53 |

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BJMC gets better response for leasing jute mills

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The jute ministry has received a total of 37 proposals from the private sector for leasing 13 state-owned mills after it said textiles could be produced at the mills apart from jute goods, officials said yesterday.

The Bangladesh Jute Mills Association (BJMC), which controls state-owned mills, released the revised terms of reference for leasing 11 jute and two non-jute mills at the end of October, shifting from its initial position that only jute goods can be produced in the 25 factories that were closed in July 2020.

"We have widened the scope for the production of textiles, backward and forward linkage items of jute and textiles to attract more investors to lease the mills," said Textiles and Jute Secretary Md Abdur Rauf.

The state corporation got applications from 22 firms that showed interest to lease out the mills for up to 30 years, officials said.

The BJMC evaluated the proposals over the past week before forwarding them to the textiles and jute ministry for clearance.

Rauf said they will now ask all the bidders to submit their final proposals to lease the mills.

"We will then review the proposals again after getting them," he added.

In the face of consistent heavy losses, the government laid off more than 50,000 workers in three categories -- permanent,

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temporary, and substitute -- by closing down all state-run jute mills.

It was promised that the closed factories would soon be modernised and reopened through various arrangements, including joint ventures, public-private partnerships or government-to-government partnerships.

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While this may seem like a flowerbed to the untrained eye, it actually is a field of Kenaf, also known as Java Jute, for producing seeds. The Bangladesh Jute Research Institute expects to collect fully grown seeds of the golden fibre by the end of January. The photo was taken from Faridpur sadar upazila yesterday.

PHOTO: SUZIT KUMAR DAS