



Farmers are seen pollinating their onion seed crops by hand at a field in Gobindapur village under Faridpur sadar upazila. With the weather having remained favourable so far, farmers expect bumper yields this year after witnessing lower-than-expected output in 2022.

PHOTO: SUZIT DAS

# Onion seed growers expect bumper production

SUZIT DAS

Onion seed growers, particularly in the largest-producing district of Faridpur, are expecting bumper production this year as the weather has remained favourable so far.

A total of 1,867 hectares of land across nine upazilas of Faridpur have been brought under onion seed cultivation this year while it was 1,714 hectares in 2022, according to the Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE).

Farmers have cultivated different varieties of onion seed, including the Rajshahi Tahirpur, Superking, Sukhsagar, BARI-4, Nasik King, BARI-1, and BARI-5.

During a visit to some onion seed fields in the Vachanchar and Gobindapur villages under Faridpur sadar upazila, this correspondent found that the farmers are passing busy times while caring for their crops.

Some were seen pollinating their onion

seed crops using their hands while others were spraying insecticides on the field.

Ishak Mollah, an onion seed grower in Bhanga upazila, said onion seed is a very profitable crop despite its high production cost.

Although Ishak did not get the expected yield in 2022 due to bad weather, he cultivated onion seed on 15 acres of land this year at a cost of Tk 22.5 lakh.

Last year, he cultivated the crop on 13 acres of land and got 26 maunds (each maund equals roughly 37 kilogrammes) of onion seed.

"I hope to get at least six to eight maunds of onion seed from each acre this year," he said.

Julhas Kha, a seed grower in Krishnapur village under Sadarpur upazila, got just 22 maunds of onion seed from seven acres of land last year due to poor weather conditions.

"Still, I was not able to sell all of the produce as low-quality Indian seeds were

available in the market," he said.

But in the hopes of getting better production and prices this year, Julhas cultivated onion seed on 10 acres of land at a cost of Tk 1.5 crore.

Nazir Uddin Mandal, a farmer in Purba Vachanchar village in the same upazila, did not get the expected yield of onion seed last year due to natural calamities. "But this year I am expecting a bumper yield, so I have cultivated onion seed on 120 decimals of land spending Tk 1.60 lakh," he said.

Nayan Kha, an onion seed grower of Krishnapur village, said onion seed is more profitable than other crops.

He spent Tk 1.5 lakh on cultivation last year and made a profit of Tk 2 lakh. He has cultivated onion seed on two acres of land this year.

Mid Harun, a grower in Vayardanga village under Bhanga upazila, expects to get at least 15 maunds of the crop from two acres of land this year as a good

number of bees were seen pollinating the fields.

Shahida Begum, an onion seed grower in Gobindapur village of the same upazila, brought 25 acres of land under cultivation spending Tk 37.50 lakh.

"Last year I did not get the expected yield due to drought, attack of swarming caterpillar and low bee pollination," she said.

"But I am expecting a bumper production this year as the condition of my field is better than what it was last year. I hope to get a good profit if the weather remains in our favour."

Mid Ziyaul Haque, deputy director of the Faridpur DAE, said the district is the top onion seed producer and the quality of its crop is better than others.

"We are giving all kinds of support to onion seed cultivators. There are a number of educated youths in the district who have already started to cultivate onion seeds."

## Emtiaz joins Padma Bank as DMD

STAR BUSINESS DESK



Mohammed Emtiaz Uddin joined Padma Bank from Premier Bank as deputy managing director recently.

Emtiaz will also act as chief business officer concurrently at the bank, said a press release.

He was serving Premier Bank as senior executive vice-president, head of retail, small and medium enterprise and agriculture banking division

simultaneously.

He previously served in Standard Chartered Bangladesh, Hongkong and Shanghai Banking Corporation (HSBC), Eastern Bank Ltd and Dhaka Bank in different leadership roles during his banking career that has spanned 23 years.

He obtained his honours and master's degrees in economics from the University of Chittagong and an MBA (major in marketing) from the Asian University of Bangladesh.

## StanChart, Friendship to transform lives of char-based farmers

STAR BUSINESS DESK

Standard Chartered Bangladesh and Friendship have joined hands to ensure that char-based communities in northern and southern regions of the country receive much needed farm-to-market support to increase agricultural output, rise above poverty, produce efficiently, and build resilience.

The newly launched project will improve the economic condition of 7,000 climate-impacted farmers from across 36 chars via the provision of sustainable agricultural technologies, training opportunities to foster growth, essential technical support and market-extension assistance to boost financial inclusion, a press release said.

The initiative will help char-based farmers achieve inclusive development, said Naser Ezaz Bijoy, chief executive officer of Standard Chartered Bangladesh.

PRICES OF KEY ESSENTIALS IN DHAKA CITY			
	PRICE (MAR 5, 2023)	% CHANGES FROM A MONTH AGO	% CHANGE FROM A YEAR AGO
Fine rice (kg)	Tk 60-Tk 75	0 ↑	3.85 ↑
Coarse rice (kg)	Tk 46-Tk 50	-4 ↓	2.13 ↑
Loose flour (kg)	Tk 58-Tk 60	3.51 ↑	68.57 ↑
Lentil (kg)	Tk 95-Tk 100	0	0
Soybean (litre)	Tk 168-Tk 172	-1.45 ↓	-1.45 ↓
Potato (kg)	Tk 18-Tk 20	-24 ↓	11.76 ↑
Onion (kg)	Tk 30-Tk 40	0	-36.36 ↓
Egg (4 pcs)	Tk 42-Tk 45	-5.43 ↓	14.47 ↑
SOURCE: TCB			



Adil Chowdhury, president and managing director of Bank Asia, and Prof Mahmood Hossain, vice-chancellor of Khulna University, exchanged signed documents of a memorandum of understanding over a research project for increasing the productivity of the agricultural sector of Bangladesh at the university campus yesterday.

PHOTO: BANK ASIA



Hemanto Pius Rozario, principal of Notre Dame College, and Samia Chowdhury, CEO of MTB Foundation, exchanged signed documents of an agreement on a project styled "Funding Feeding Programme of Literacy School at Notre Dame College" at the former's office in Dhaka recently. Syed Mahbubur Rahman, managing director of Mutual Trust Bank, and Rais Uddin Ahmad, deputy managing director, were present.

PHOTO: MUTUAL TRUST BANK



Nuruddin Md Sadeque Hussain, managing director of Southeast Bank, attended a "Haji Agent Conference" jointly organised by the bank and Visa, the global leader in digital payment solutions, in Dhaka recently. Soumya Basu, country manager for Bangladesh, Nepal and Bhutan at Visa, among others, was present.

PHOTO: SOUTHEAST BANK

## Bank Asia, Khulna University sign MoU to boost agri sector

STAR BUSINESS DESK

Bank Asia Limited yesterday signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with Khulna University to improve productivity in Bangladesh's agricultural sector.

Tahmidur Rashid, senior executive vice-president of Bank Asia, and Prof Amit Roy Chowdhury, treasurer of Khulna University, signed the MoU at the latter's office in Khulna, said a press release.

Under this MoU, Bank Asia will extend cooperation as a part of its corporate social responsibility activities to Khulna University for a research project on "introducing novel crop residue management approach for improving soil structure and crop productivity in the coastal saline soils of Bangladesh", undertaken by the department of soil, water and environment discipline of the university.

## Real-time monitoring of imports, national

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"Future agricultural growth can be hindered by worsening soil fertility, diminishing access to land and other scarce natural resources, increasing crop vulnerability to pests and diseases, and continuing population growth."

In addition, climate change is already having profound impacts on livelihoods in Bangladesh, particularly those within agriculture. "So, more efficient and resilient land management practices need to be adopted especially in rice and pulse crop systems to prevent further environmental degradation and better cope with climate shocks."

He said advancements in nutrition have slowed down.

For example, while there have been significant improvements in reducing stunting in Bangladesh, it still affects about one out of three children under five. Early childhood malnutrition increases the risk of disease and impairs productivity throughout the life cycle.

"Bangladesh has made significant strides in addressing food security. Moving forward, it is critical to building on this progress with evidence-based policies for better nutrition and more sustainable production," said Swinnen.

Progress in the ensuing nutrition security has been slow despite the increased availability of foods, including staples. Swinnen explained many countries have experienced increasing rates of chronic malnutrition, micro-nutrient deficiency, and obesity over the past 10 years.

The rapid growth in the production and consumption of ultra-processed foods has also led to lower diet quality in many countries. These trends have been exacerbated by the coronavirus pandemic and the reverberations of the war in Ukraine on food systems.

When food prices undergo sudden and drastic increases, families tend to reduce their consumption of healthy foods and instead consume more staples that are relatively cheaper but less nutritious, according to Swinnen. "This perpetuates malnutrition

and can have long-lasting consequences for pregnant women and young children."

A former lead economist at the World Bank and economic adviser to the European Commission, Swinnen suggested policymakers focus their efforts on three main areas to improve diets.

The first is scaling up nutrition education, which can include nutrition visits from healthcare workers, cooking demonstrations, social media campaigns, and many other interventions, which can often be paired with other community and agricultural development activities.

The second is government spending, which has an important role to play in improving diets. Nutrition-sensitive social protection measures can help families maintain healthy diets while coping with shocks such as the current food price spike.

The third is policymakers can take action to improve the food environment.

"Governments can opt to mandate labelling and certification requirements that provide consumers with important information on the quality of different food items," said Swinnen.

"Policymakers can also set regulations that limit the marketing and sale of ultra-processed foods in schools or other public spaces."

The IFPRI chief pointed out that an important cause of child stunting in Bangladesh is that mothers do not consume enough healthy, nutritious food during pregnancy.

"Efforts to further reduce the problem of child under-nutrition will have to focus on this challenge," he said, adding that social protection programmes are another important avenue to protect food security.

Swinnen is also the managing director for system transformation of the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research, a global partnership that unites organisations engaged in research for a food-secure future.

Currently, the Systems Transformation Science Group is leading 11 initiatives that address

all five CGIAR impact areas: climate adaptation and mitigation; environmental health and biodiversity; nutrition, health, and food security; poverty reduction, livelihoods, and jobs; and gender equality, youth, and social inclusion.

All of these will produce valuable insights that are relevant to Bangladesh and other regional partners, said Swinnen.

For example, its Foresight Initiative will collaborate closely with country partners to provide state-of-the-art analytics and policy advice in response to frequent shocks and the Sustainable Healthy Diets Initiative will identify policy options and strengthen capacity for developing pathways to more healthy diets, better livelihoods, and greater equity.

Swinnen thinks research and innovation will be critical to improving the sustainability of the world's food systems and improving diets while continuing to provide enough food for a growing global population.

"Our collaboration in Bangladesh and the region has demonstrated this potential and I am excited to see what we can do together in the coming years."

## UN development

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Rising fuel costs have caused "a short-term shock" for countries struggling to maintain basic fiscal stability, according to Steiner.

And they face growing pressure to invest in renewable energy and combating climate change, the UN official added.

"Inevitably, the ability of poorer countries and middle-income countries to significantly expand in clean energy infrastructure... is being affected," he said, calling for greater international investment in "clean and affordable electricity" for poorer nations.

Steiner said that energy security has become such a hot international topic in the past two years that he expected an "exponential increase" in investment in clean energy infrastructure in the next five years.