

Cultivation of potato, maize on same land sees success

MIRZA SHAKIL, *Tangail*

Farmers in Nagarpur upazila of Tangail have achieved success in growing potato and maize together on the same land. The integrated approach suggested by the Department of Agricultural Extension has greatly reduced the time and cost of cultivation. As such, farmers are becoming increasingly interested in this approach.

Masud Miah, a farmer of Naipara village in Goihata union, said he first planted potato as per the advice of local agriculture officials.

He then planted maize on the same field about a month later.

"This has helped greatly reduce input costs, including that of fertiliser," Masud said.

Besides, potato yields have been good due to favourable weather.

"So, I have benefitted more as the tuber's current market price is also good. In the future, I will cultivate potato and maize in the same manner on a larger piece of land," he added.

The integrated approach suggested by the Department of Agricultural Extension has greatly reduced the time and cost of cultivation

Seeing the success of farmers like Masud, many other locals have become interested to try this method of cultivation, according to agriculture officials.

Abdul Matin Biswas, agriculture officer of Nagarpur upazila, said maize cultivation is growing in the region.

"We saw that farms in Manikganj are cultivating red amaranth alongside maize an associate crop. Inspired by this, we asked local growers to cultivate potato with maize and yields have been satisfactory," he added.

Farmers need to keep free space between the rows of potato and maize plants when using this method, which also improves yields by protecting against pest attacks.

"If this integrated system is extended, farmers will get the opportunity to harvest potatoes and maize together about four-and-a-half months after sowing," he added.

Agriculture officials are regularly monitoring fields and provide advice on land management to farmers in a bid to expand the use of this system for its considerable profitability.



Farmers need to keep free space between the rows of potato and maize plants when cultivating the two crops together, which also improves yields by protecting against pest attacks.

PHOTO: MIRZA SHAKIL

Interests of gig economy workers remain unprotected: experts

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Bangladesh has seen tremendous growth in its gig economy over the past decade as nearly a million people in the country now provide online freelancing, outsourcing, ridesharing and delivery services, according to a paper presented at a seminar yesterday.

Despite the expansion, the interests of workers in the gig economy, a labour market that relies heavily on temporary and part-time positions filled by independent contractors and freelancers rather than full-time employees, remains unprotected in absence of policies.

Lack of quality employment, insecurity of jobs and absence of insurance against injury during work are the major issues for workers in the gig economy.

"The job contracts of many platform workers are ambiguous," said Mohammad Mahfuz Kabir, research director of the Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies (BISS), while presenting the paper on challenges and opportunities for the gig economy in Bangladesh.

BISS organised the event at its auditorium, where Mashiur Rahman, economic affairs adviser to the prime minister, spoke among others. Zaidi Sattar,



chairman of the Policy Research Institute of Bangladesh, chaired the seminar.

In his presentation, Kabir said the expansion of the gig economy as seen from the growth ridesharing in the country, food and parcel delivery, and freelancing has created jobs. But this has not "diminished worry" among workers.

"Massive variations were found in the earnings of gig workers, both within and between platforms," he said citing a study.

Kabir then said the ridesharing industry in Bangladesh is worth \$259 million and the market value of ridesharing startups in the country would reach \$1 billion in the next five to seven years. Also,

the remote platform economy or cloud-work generates \$100 million annually.

"The platform economy model continues to attract workers as they feel the sector can offer cash flow and flexible work hours," he added.

Internet access and the availability of smartphones have played a vital role in the growth and expansion of the gig economy in Bangladesh.

As the sector come of Bangladeshi gig economy has come of age, policies such as data protection, freedom of association and collective bargaining, occupational safety and social security for protection of workers' interest are needed.

"If any ride sharing service providers fall into any accident, there is no insurance protection for the person. In case of delivery, similar would be found," Kabir said, adding that some platform-based companies provide insurance.

But in case of Bangladesh, it is yet seen.

Major General Sheikh Pasha Habib Uddin, director general of the BISS, said the emergence of the gig economy will be beneficial for countries like Bangladesh.

He said the gig economy has the potential to become a growth engine for the country by producing jobs for many people with an appropriate mix of policies, digital infrastructure and supporting services.

However, there are some challenges along the way as well, he said, adding that Bangladeshi freelancers need to work through other countries' digital platform as the country does not have its own gig market.

Due to this reason, Bangladeshi freelancers need to spend more time for getting work orders.

Secondly, the payment methods of foreign websites seem difficult for Bangladeshi freelancers, particularly those living in rural areas, Uddin added.

Wahid Sharif, president of the Bangladesh Association of

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Five money-saving tips

JASIM UDDIN RASEL

The cost of living is increasing significantly. As a result, managing family expenses relying only on the monthly income is becoming more difficult nowadays.

How can you save money in this scenario?

If you follow a few tactics, you will be able to set aside a small amount each month. And this small amount will give you a handsome amount after a period of time.

You may follow the following five tips to save money each month.

FIX YOUR GOAL

Set your future goal. You may divide your goals into short-term and long term.

Short-term goals shall be attained within a year and these may

include buying a television, freeze or any household items. Long-term goals may take five years to achieve and include savings for the booking money for flats or plots or higher education for children.

When you are done about your goal then you will get the desired amount.

Now, find out the monthly saving amount.

Don't worry if the savings amount is small at the beginning. Continue it and try to increase it whenever possible.

And of course, invest your savings in the tools from where you could earn high returns to reach your goal quickly.

PAY OFF YOUR DEBT

Do you have any high-interest loans? If yes, then pay off your debt first.

Suppose, you are paying 12 per cent interest against your loan but you're getting 7 per cent interest on your savings. This means you are paying an extra 5 percentage points. So, it will be wise to pay the loan first and then start saving.

KEEP LOOSE CHANGE ASIDE

Set aside the loose change each day after returning home from the office. If it is not possible, try to do it on a weekly basis after returning from kitchen markets.



Suppose, you keep less than Tk 100 aside after returning from the shopping. By doing it, you may start a deposit scheme at Tk 500 and this will help you get a big amount after five or 10 years.

MAKE A LIST OF MONTHLY EXPENSES

Maintain a monthly expenses list and continue it for the next few months. Now identify the expenses that are unnecessary. And also identify the expenditures that could be minimised or excluded.

If you identify that eating out costs more, then buy frozen foods or prepare food at home. This will help reduce your monthly expenses.

TRY TO EARN EXTRA MONEY

Do extra jobs to earn more. If you are good at mathematics or English, you may earn extra as a private tutor after your office time. Or you may earn by doing freelancing or starting blogging on weekends.

Saving a little is better than not saving at all. So, try to save money on a regular basis to reach your goal.

The writer is the author of Smart Money Hacks

Stocks drop amid confidence crisis

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Stocks on the Dhaka bourse continued bleeding and extended the losing streak to the second straight session amid a confidence crisis among investors.

The DSEX, the benchmark index of the Dhaka Stock Exchange (DSE), lost 18 points, or 0.29 per cent, to 6,213.

The DS30, the blue-chip index, decreased 0.11 per cent to 2,215, while the DSES, the shariah-compliant index, went down 0.1 per cent to 1,353.

Turnover, a key indicator of the market, rose 7.8 per cent to Tk 607 crore.

Of the securities, 21 advanced, 110 declined and 175 did not show any price movement.

Olympic Industries made the highest gain with an increase of 6.3 per cent.

Al-Haj Textile Mills, Padma Islami Life Insurance, Chartered Life Insurance Company, and ADN Telecom were among the top gainers. Metro Spinning was the highest loser, shedding 9.9 per cent.

Bangladesh General Insurance Company, Union Capital, Monno Agro & General Machinery, and Sena Kalyan Insurance Company were also on the list of the significant losers. Meghna Life Insurance was the most-traded stock with its issues worth Tk 50 crore changing hands.

Olympic Industries, Rupali Life Insurance Company, ADN Telecom, and Aamra Networks also registered significant turnover.

Meanwhile, Caspi, the all-share price index of the Chittagong Stock Exchange, fell 40 points, or 0.22 per cent, to close at 18,349.

Of the issues, 14 rose, 50 retreated and 106 did not see any price swings. However, the turnover of the port city bourse dropped more than 8.5 per cent to Tk 6.4 crore.



A tractor sprays pesticides on wheat crops in Arapongas, Brazil. On a year-on-year basis, wheat prices were 15 per cent lower in the global markets in the first two weeks of March, the World Bank said in its food security update.

PHOTO: REUTERS/FILE

Rice, wheat and maize prices fall globally

World Bank says

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Maize, wheat, and rice prices closed lower in the two weeks to March 9, according to the World Bank.

In its food security update, the multilateral agency said the prices of maize, wheat, and rice were down 6 per cent, 7 per cent, and 2 per cent lower, respectively, compared to two weeks ago.

On a year-on-year basis, maize and wheat prices are 15 per cent lower, whereas rice prices are 19 per cent higher.

Compared to January 2021, maize and wheat prices are up 24 per cent and 7 per cent, respectively, while rice prices are down 3 per cent.

The agriculture, and cereal price indices closed 2 per cent and 5 per cent lower, respectively, compared to two weeks ago, while the export price index was unchanged, the World Bank said.