



Regional identity and the untapped power of foods

When food carries the name of the land it comes from, it tells a story of soil, water, people, climate, history, and culture. In Bangladesh, this tale is beginning to take shape through the growing recognition of Geographical Indication (GI) foods, which legally certify the uniqueness of products tied to specific regions or districts. This offers new hope for farmers, fishermen, artisans, moiras (sweet makers), and

local businesses. Yet, the hope is still fragile, slowly shaping itself into a brighter future.

Bangladesh's GI products cover a wide range of food traditions, reflecting the cultural pride of each district. From fruits like Chapainawabganj's khirsapati mangoes, Rangpur's haribhangha mangoes or Narsingdi's lotkon, to field treasures such as Dinajpur's kataribhog rice or Sherpur's tulshimala rice, every

item carries the story of local farmers and our seasons.

The rivers and coast add their own signature through hilsa and bagda prawn, while sweetmeats such as Bogura's curd, Tangail's Porabari chamcham, or Natore's kachagolla continue to define regional identity. Together, these products show how deeply food is tied to place and our identity.

However, the question arises as to how much of the potential has Bangladesh managed to unlock with these GI tags? What does GI recognition actually mean for the farmers, the fishermen, or the moiras? And how much of that spotlight truly reaches them?

Dr Md Salauddin Palash, Professor, Department of Agribusiness and Marketing at Bangladesh Agricultural University, offered perhaps the most

direct assessment: the market has not changed in any noticeable way.

"In theory, a GI product should transform a product's economic fate. It should guarantee authenticity, raise value, draw new buyers, and most importantly, open doors to the export market. In practice, the change is slower, quieter, and more complicated," Dr Palash explained.

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