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REVIEW ARTICLE



A review on Bangabandhu and agriculture: Future path for self-sufficiency in food production of Bangladesh

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ABSTRACT

Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman is one of the rabble rousing, undisputable and charismatic leaders in the global history. Due to his inherent and extra ordinary qualities he gained the trust, support and hope of the general peoples (East-Bengalis). This paper aims to review the key roles played by him for uplifting the agricultural sector of Bangladesh. Bangladesh wouldn't become independent and a sovereign country without his bold contribution. After the bloody liberation war of 1971; the country had a poor and fragile economy and shortage of all sorts of basic needs specially food. After the formation of government, the leader took revolutionary steps for reformation of the agricultural sector of the country. From his intuition he felt that, for agricultural development and gaining self-sufficiency in food production; some major changes have to be done. Thus, he put special emphasis on agricultural education, research, extension, industries and markets; he also waived the taxes on agricultural lands. To encourage innovative and talented students to study agriculture; he upgraded the status of the agriculturists to first class officer. Bangabandhu's vision was clear, challenging and reality based. He decorated the agricultural policies basing on the farmers and their economic conditions. The leader put special importance in practicing integrated agriculture so that we may get all types of food (cereal, pulse, oil, vegetable, fruits, fish, and livestock). Due to his dynamic efforts and future guidelines at that time (1972-1975); today Bangladesh has not only achieved food security but also became a role model for agricultural development globally. Through his ideology and principles Bangladesh is moving rapidly forward to become a developed country by 2041.

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INTRODUCTION

Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman is the architect of the independence of Bangladesh. Population of the country was 75 million in 1971 (UNFPA, 2020). Food shortage was about 25-30 lakh tons. Bangabandhu put great emphasis on agriculture after the liberation war. His dream was to achieve self-sufficiency in food production thus he formulated long-term plan for the improvement of agriculture sector (Shahnawaz, 2015). Food, in the hierarchy of all needs, is the most basic need for sustenance of life and is the perennial problem issue for healthy and active

life of mankind. Since Independence, Bangladesh has made significant progress in increasing domestic production of food grains. This, to a large extent, helped in overcoming the constraints of insufficient national food availability.

We are the proud citizens of the greatest Bengali of a thousand years Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. Bangabandhu wanted to make Bangladesh full of food grains which was achieved by supreme sacrifices made by three million lives. Therefore, he called green revolution after liberation war. Bangabandhu had a dream to establish Bangladesh which will be free from hunger and poverty. He wanted to see Bangladesh as

'Sonar Bangla' developing agriculture and farmers of the country (Rahman *et al.*, 2014). On 13th February, 1973, he underscored to develop the rural areas of the country in a speech at Bangladesh Agricultural University in Mymensingh. Because, he perceived that the villages are development epicenter of the country. When the villages will be developed and enriched economically, the whole country will go ahead (The Daily Sun, 2017).

Bangabandhu's policy made Bangladesh a role model in agriculture. Bangladesh has become a 'role model' in the world for increasing agricultural production significantly in the past few decades, making the country self-reliant for staple food-grains and rice production increased about 4 times compare to 1972. In the last 47 years after the liberation, the country's food grain, including paddy production soared to nearly 4 crore metric tons from the production level of 1.10 crore MT in 1972 while the arable land declined by nearly 30 percent (BBS, 2018). The country has also ranked the first in jute export and second in jute production, first in increasing fruit yield per hectare, first in crop variety development, third in vegetable production yield, fourth in rice and tea production, seventh in mango production, eighth in guava and potato production, fourth in fresh water fish production in the world (Sarker, 2020).

METHODOLOGY

This review article is based on the secondary source of information. Secondary information was gathered from available literature review. Secondary data was also assembled from different journal, website, articles and books, essays, national and international newspapers descriptive and preferential qualitative techniques were employed in this study. We also looked into documents, research reports and articles of government departments, international agencies, research institutes and individual researchers on the problems of food Security.

EFFORTS MADE BY BANGABANDHU

After the liberation war of 1971 when independent Bangladesh was trying to reform its resources and broken sectors, Bangabandhu attempted to complete a survey to make overall development of the agriculture. For proper and future planning this was imperative. He made a master plan on the basis of the survey. Due to socio-economic issues, the division of lands is increasing day by day. He emphasized to set up integrated agricultural farm which will lead to the development of agriculture. The leader said, "We can't ensure our expected agricultural production. We must underscore integrated farming system to increase our food production. We must take measures to educate farmers about latest cultivation methods and authority concerned must share their experiences with the farmers. Then, we can achieve our intended success (Trisha *et al.*, 2017). To engage talented students to agriculture, Bangabandhu gave first class status to agriculturist profession. He perceived that if the farmers of the county are developed, the country will develop. Bangabandhu took revolutionary measures to make farmers

free from hunger and poverty. He made arrangements to provide quality seeds, fertilizers, insecticides and irrigation so that the farmers can grow more crops. With a view to ensuring management activities, Bangabandhu established Bangladesh Agriculture Research Council, Bangladesh Agriculture Development Corporation, Uddayan Development Board, Cotton Development Board, Seed Certification Agency, Bangladesh Sugar-cane Research Institute, and Fisheries Development Corporation. In order to provide loans to farmer on simple terms and conditions, Bangabandhu established Bangladesh Krishi Bank. He also took measures to distribute khas lands to the landless farmers of the country. He also remitted taxes on minimum 25 bigha land (Sarker, 2020; Rahman and Ghose, 2019).

Putting dam around the coastal areas, he protected crops of 18 lakhs acre land of the farmers. In fact, Bangabandhu got huge response after introducing green revolution in Bangladesh. Therefore, we are now self-sufficient and surplus in foods like rice, fish, meat and vegetables (Ali, 2020). In 1973, he made the arrangements to rehabilitate 22 lakhs farmers. In his period, various types of low-lift pump and deed tube well were set up. The farmers were distributed hybrid paddy (IR-8) and wheat seeds which was then brought from Philippine (Masud, 2020).

From the year 1975 to 2017; food and fiber production (yield) of cereal, vegetables, oil seeds and jute enhanced by many folds. Rice production was 19,142,624 MTon in 1975 where it is 56,417,319 MTon 42 years later (Figure 1). For, vegetable crops a 478,468 MTon yield were gained in 1975 but after 42 years of independence it has drastically reached to 1,634,000 MTon (Figure 2). In case of oil seeds, 590 thousand ton were obtained in 1975 which was raised to 2,531 thousand ton in 2017 (Figure 3). Total amount of jute yield was 788,580 thousand ton in 1975 which was progressed to a production of 1,613,762 thousand ton in 2017 (Figure 4). The continuous enhancement of yield and production with time is an indication that more emphasis, importance and inputs were given in the agricultural sector of Bangladesh. Thus, rice production increased by 3 times, oilseeds by 4 times, vegetables by 3.5 times and jute by 2 times till 1975 (FAOSAT, 2020). And all these have been possible through favorable agricultural policy, implementation and Bangabandhu's strategic actions towards agricultural development.

Bangabandhu's attempt to agriculture

Bangabandhu laid the stone for Agricultural development in Bangladesh. His constructive thoughts, policies and plan initiated the inclusive development of agriculture in Bangladesh. After the independence, Bangabandhu had taken some major initiatives for the development of the farmers and increasing food production. Contribution of Bangabandhu is to the country's agriculture sector was phenomenal. Bangabandhu; the father of the nation took effective policy measures for modernizing agriculture sector, which was saddled with traditional practices. At the same time, he took some firm decisions for ensuring farmers fair prices so they can live a decent life (Hasan, 2000). He also upgraded the status of the government officials who work in the field of agriculture. Bangabandhu understood that agriculture

Production/Yield quantities of Rice, paddy in Bangladesh

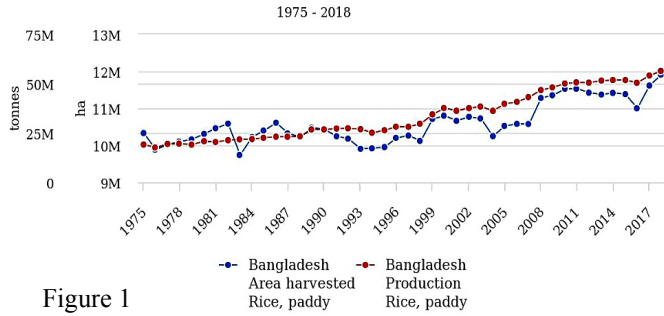


Figure 1

Source: FAOSTAT (Mar 26, 2020)

Production/Yield quantities of Vegetables, fresh nes in Bangladesh

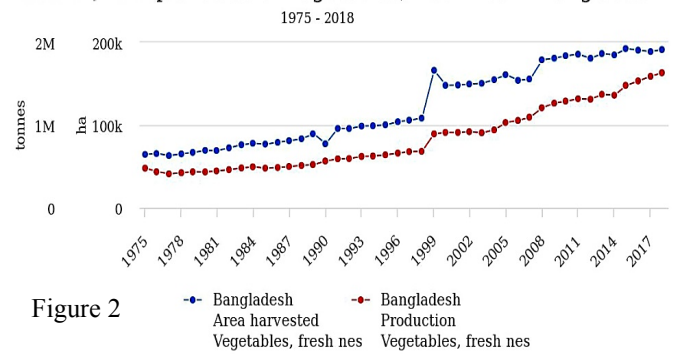


Figure 2

Source: FAOSTAT (Mar 26, 2020)

Production/Yield quantities of Oilseeds nes in Bangladesh

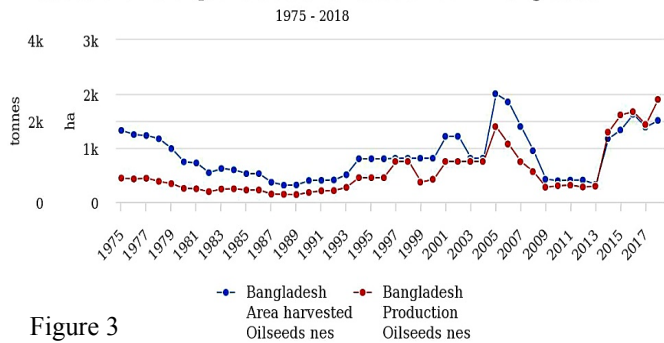


Figure 3

Source: FAOSTAT (Mar 26, 2020)

Production/Yield quantities of Jute in Bangladesh

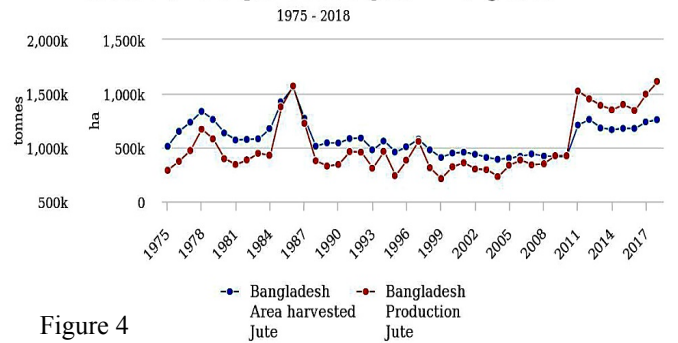


Figure 4

Source: FAOSTAT (Mar 26, 2020)

Figure 1-4. Production trend of rice (1), vegetables (2), oil seeds (3) and jute (4) from 1975 to 2017 (FAOSTAT, 2020).

will not only provide food to feed the people, but also will remain as the main source of income for the majority of the people (Reza and Yasmin, 2019).

Therefore, he rightly prioritized agriculture and industrialization as the forces to rely on. He took some prudent initiatives to ensure agricultural growth. Some of these initiatives were: rebuilding the war-ravaged agricultural infrastructure, ensuring supply of agricultural equipment on emergency basis free of cost or at concessional rates, ensuring adequate supply of seed, cancelling 1 million certificate cases for loan default against farmers filed during the Pakistan period, exempt agricultural credit for marginal farmers, withdraw of certificate cases against them and distribute 'khas' land among landless people, fixing minimum fair prices for agro-products, cooperative farming, subsidies in agricultural inputs, facilitate irrigation, emphasis on agricultural education, reform and rebuilding agricultural research, land reform, ration facilities for poor and marginal farmers etc. Bangabandhu revitalized the agriculture research, education and extension system and introduced technology based modern agriculture in the country. He created Bangladesh Agricultural Council, Horticulture Development Board, Seed Certification Agency, Bangladesh Agriculture Development Corporation, Bangladesh Tea Research Institute etc. Bangladesh Agriculture Research Institute, Bangladesh Rice Research Institute also upgraded and modernized during his tenure. Bangabandhu took initiatives for improved and short-time cultivation methods. Bangladesh would never be self-reliant in food if Bangabandhu didn't emphasized on agricultural research to extend cropping of the high yielding rice varieties in the country (Roy, 2020).

Bangabandhu's Sonar Bangla

Bangabandhu had a strong dream to revive the Bangla as Sonar Bangla. He mentioned in his many speeches and writing the phrase 'Sonar Bangla' (Reza, 2020). Even before the independence of Bangladesh always he was thinking about the reestablishing the Sonar Bangla which was few centuries before. Past glory of this land inspired him for such thinking. He knew that, once the Bengal was a land of prosperity and happiness. The proverb 'store house full of paddy, pond full of fishes' (*Gola vora dhan, pukur vora mach*) revealed the story of happiness and golden era of Bengal in the past. The country was famous for its agricultural production at that time. The country exported muslin, silk, cotton, spices etc. This land attracted many foreign traders. Bengal was a real trade hub in that era. In 18th century, the life standard of Bengal was compared with Great Britain. Bangabandhu knew all these things about the glorious past and thought to revive all these. He believed that this country will regain the past golden glory by attaining sustainable agriculture production. His plan was to double the agricultural production which can feed the huge people. To make this, he realized the reality and means. He said in one of his speech, "To build a Golden Bengal, we need Golden People". Bangladesh is plagued by exploitation, oppression, and looting. To solve these problems and to build a happy and prosperous Bangladesh, the people needs to work hard to increase production" (Rahman, 2016). These were words from the heart of our Father of the Nation. He uttered 'We will turn this war-ravaged country into a golden one. In the Bengal of future- mothers will smile, and children will play. It will be a society free of exploitation. Start the movement of development in the fields and farms and in the factories.

We can surely rebuild the country through hard work. Let us work together so that the Golden Bengal shines again' (Roy, 2020).

Status upgradation of agriculturists

Bangabandhu had a miraculous vision to engage the educated people in agriculture. He thought that, our farmers are poor and don't have sufficient knowledge on modern farming. If they become educated and trained, if the meritorious people can receive agricultural education and can work practically in the field with the farmers, the development will attain immediately. Therefore, his ridiculous speech on 13 February, 1973 at Convocation of Bangladesh Agricultural University, Mymensingh was an inspirable matter to attract more meritorious student in agricultural education. The grade up of the agricultural degree holders to first class officials on February 13 in 1973 inspired the agriculturists to work more for the development of the country's agriculture sector. He felt that, agriculture works is meaningless without practical work. Only reading books are not enough for development. Therefore, he mentioned in his speech clearly that each and every agriculturist must go to the villages, work and share with the farmers. He knew that, if we want to make ridiculous changes of agriculture sector, we have to train the farmers and motivation is important to improve the traditional practices. He focused his intention on agricultural revolution in his inspiring speech (Roy, 2020).

Bangabandhu's vision for integrated agriculture

Bangabandhu understood that we have resources, but we don't know how to use and integrate those. He always mentioned in his several speeches that, "we have so fertile land where plant can be grown sowing seeds only and those plants give us fruits. So, why our people will suffer for food?" In one of his speech he also said that, rice-bread can fill the stomach, but if we want to develop an intelligent nation, we have to ensure balance food and nutrition for all (Roy, 2020). Without a talent nation, no country can attain development (Rahman, 2017). Therefore, he gave emphasis not only on rice, wheat or maize production; but also gave equal importance on fish, meat, egg, milk, vegetables and fruit production. He generated a vibrant idea for integrated farming following the collective farming approach. His driven force had given the right direction to the farming community to boost up agricultural production (Roy, 2020).

Collective farming and rural development

Bangabandhu knew that farmers of Bangladesh and their land are bonded with a deep relation like mother and child. Farmers are solely reliable on land for their feed and lives. He thought, this relationship should remain unchanged at any cost. Therefore, he tried to introduce the collective farming system in where farmers will grow their crops jointly without breaking their land borders or ails. His vision was to develop a special village-development movement for inclusive development of rural community. He outlined the structure of that in where it was described very specifically about the formation of rural

cooperatives, funding, production and distribution system etc. (Musa, 2012). He developed that outline based on four fundamental issues like increase agricultural production, distribution, employment and inclusive development of the villages. For convenient financial and production management, he proposed to form a rural cooperative having land within 299 acres to 500 acres. The land owners and growers will form a management committee in where 12 from the owners, 6 from the landless and farm labor group and 3 as nominated members. Each rural cooperative had an advisory board. This was described in the introduction of first fifth year plan 1973-1978 (Chowdhury, 2014; Alam, 2016). What an imaginary power of Bangabandhu was to rightly balancing between the agricultural production and distribution system if we see the village development projects outline. He mentioned that the management committee will prepare a production plan, determine the crops according to that, crop calendar, cultivate those crops without hampering the land ownership and inheritance. He proposed to distribute produces 33 percent to the land owners and 67 percent to the cooperative in where committee can spend maximum 70 percent for production and input cost, 7 percent for cooperative management and establishment cost, 10 percent for capital development, 1 percent for tax and tariff, 5 percent for village welfare. The members will get 25 percent profit from their earnings, 25 for management committee members and 50 percent will be spent for rural development. He allocated about taka 1 crore for this at that time. He wanted to do piloting in 75 villages first and planned to form 50 thousand rural cooperatives throughout the country. It was estimated that if those cooperatives function well, about 1 lakh ton rice will be produced more annually which value was in that time was about 3600 crore taka. Not only that, about 10 lakh farmers and youths will be employed and 25 lakh farmers will be trained thorough these. Undoubtedly it can be said that if such plan was implemented, a ridiculous change was happened in rural development (Roy, 2020).

Conclusion

Bangladesh is now a model for the world; regarding economic development in spite of hundreds of barriers. Meeting the food shortage, Bangladesh is now turned as an exporting country. Bangladesh is an example in the world in all human development index including reducing mother and child death, increase of average life expectancy, taking quality food. All these have been made possible due to the success in agriculture. We achieved these as we are independent and the architect of the independence of this country is father of the nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. But, after the killing of Bangabandhu, the achievement in agriculture was decreased. Through his epoch-making measures, we have achieved self-sufficiency in food under the visionary leadership of his daughter *Jananetri* Sheikh Hasina. Today Bangladesh is transforming into upper-middle economy in 2031 and developed economy by 2041. For this, we must keep on the progress of the key factor agriculture development at any cost.

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