

BRRI Dhan 98 brings new hope to farmers

Fallow lands brought under Aus cultivation with the variety

ANM Mohibub Uz Zaman
back from Lakshmipur

With a view to increasing the Aus production, the government has brought fallow land under cultivation with a new rice variety called BRRI Dhan 98.

Although the variety was introduced three years back, farmers started cultivating their lands at a large scale from this year, after the government's continuous encouragement for better production.

This variety of paddy has been cultivated on a total of 500 hectares of land in five upazilas under Lakshmipur district which usually are left out during Aus season, said Dr. Zakir Hossain, Deputy Director of the Department of Agriculture Extension in Lakshmipur.

He said farmers can harvest paddy in just 110 days by cultivating the new rice variety and also get higher yield in a short duration.

According to the local farmers, they are hopeful of having more production of Aus.

"I usually cultivate paddy during the Aman and Boro season while my land has been left uncared for during the Aus season. Being inspired, I am cultivating my land this



time," Abdur Rahman Sohag, a farmer from Naldog in Lakshmipur Sadar told the Daily Sun.

This year he cultivated the rice variety on his three bighas of land

and got around 22 maunds of paddy with a cost of Tk 8,000 in each bigha of land, he said.

They can harvest the paddy 40-60 days earlier and get five maunds

more of paddy than regular Aus varieties, he said, Sohag can also now cultivate winter vegetables on his field.

Rice of this paddy is thinner, not

sticky and crispy. It has a huge demand among consumers, said the Director (Administration) of BRRI Dr. Abdul Latif.

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Farmers were usually reluctant to cultivate paddy during Aus season as the regular variety gives lower production and longer duration, he said, adding that this new variety has the potential to transform the landscape by impressive yield of around 20-30 maunds in each bigha.

"It takes 20 days in seedbeds and 90 days in cultivating. A total of 110 days need to be harvested while some farmers can harvest it in 105 days," he said.

"This variety is suitable to cultivate in all regions of the country in the Aus season," Dr. Latif said. Shahjahan, another farmer of the Naldogi in Lakshmipur Sadar, said they usually cultivate for eight months and keep land empty during the Aus season.

"This year we can cultivate this BRRI 98 with the help of the BRRI and get huge production," he said, adding that they have to irrigate lands with water due to drought this year. BRRI director Dr. Abdul Latif, however, said that this rice variety needs less irrigation than the other Aus varieties. "It is also insect resist-

ant and not due to rainfall or wind." The agricultural land is decreasing day by day in the country while the population is increasing, Dr. Latif said.

He also said that cultivation of paddy decreases in the Aus season, "but this variety can increase cultivation."

Zakir Hossain, DD of DAE Lakshmipur, said that they have targeted to cultivate Aus paddy on 35,000 hectares of land in the district, but farmers cultivate only 17,000 hectares of land.

This year the new Aus paddy variety increased the cultivable land by 500 hectares which was kept idle, he added.

In order to maintain the food supply of 170 million people in the world's most populous country, crops must be grown repeatedly from the same land, and more crops must be grown.

BRRI 98 developed by the Bangladesh Rice Research Institute (BRRI) was released for cultivation in 2020 and gained popularity gradually. This variety was cultivated in a vast tract of land across the country this year. The variety holds immense prospects for enhancing agricultural productivity during the Aus season.