



Rice and Rise of Bangladesh

Bangladesh is proud to have many success stories over the years, especially in achieving self-reliance in production of food, livestock and fishery in the country. I'm happy to share with you one such success story. Legends speak, once upon a time households in Bangladesh were abundant in rice, fish and cattle. However, being a small deltaic country of land scarcity, the increase of population, depletion of cultivable land, repeated natural calamities and series of famines, led to decline in rice production. Bangladesh became a chronic food-deficit land.

In 1971 with our independence, we inherited a food deficit country. Achieving self-reliance in rice production is in a sense synonymous with the Rise of Bangladesh. As the staple food of our people, rice is synonymous with food security for Bangladesh.

Historically, we have never been food sufficient. We were always in chronic food shortage. Millions of people had died in famine and several millions had suffered from hunger and malnutrition. Even after independence, the situation was not much improved. Realising this critical scenario, Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman urged the agricultural graduates and scientists in 1973, at Bangladesh Agricultural University (BAU) to produce more rice to meet the requirement of country's ever-increasing population, because he was unable to procure rice anywhere from the world despite all efforts. So, one of his

priority policy was to make Bangladesh self-reliant in food production. This was the direction or inspiration given to the rice scientists immediately after independence to ensure food security. Inspired by Bangabandhu's directives, the rice scientists of Bangladesh, with their relentless efforts, innovated various (HYV) High Yielding Varieties of Rice.

In the mid-seventies, the "Miracle Rice" IR8 and revolutionary year-round rice variety BR3, brought the first breakthrough in our national food production. After Bangabandhu's unfortunate assassination, the revolution was clogged for a long-time. In 1996, Bangabandhu's worthy daughter, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina came to power in a landslide victory in national parliamentary election, and took necessary steps to boost food production to make the country self-sufficient. For the first time, we achieved self-sufficiency in food especially in rice. Our PM was awarded the prestigious Ceres Medal by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) for this tremendous achievement.

Since independence, our population increased two and half times but rice production has increased more than three and half fold which reflects the success story of our rice scientists, extension agents and farmers, with the strong support of the pro-agriculture government led by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. Again in 2013, she made the country not only self-reliant in food, but also enabled us to be a food surplus

country by showing courage to export rice abroad. Bangladesh Rice Research Institute (BRRI) is a key contributor behind this tremendous achievement.

In 2015, BRRI has formulated Rice Vision for 2050 and beyond; estimating projected rice requirement for 2030, 2041 and 2050. The projected require-

ment technologies we got the momentum and already exceeded the production target. For example- During last ten years, (2009-19) period rice production has increased @ 0.6 MT year⁻¹ and this year it will be even more than expected rate.

According to recent statistics of USDA, Bangladesh has the highest av-

erage rice yield in South Asia as per world standard. During 2019-20 production years, Bangladesh is going to clinch third place beating Indonesia in global rice production with an increased output of 38.54 million tons enabling surplus of 4.0 MT meeting requirements for 167.0 million people, in-

cluding 1.2 million Rohingya refugees. Bangladesh has emerged as a global model for combating hunger and obtained great success in becoming a country of food surplus from chronic food shortage. At the time of independence in 1971, it was beyond anyone's imagination that a tiny piece of land in the South Asian region called Bangladesh will perform so tremendously that it will exceed several domestic as well international agencies' targets on economic performance.

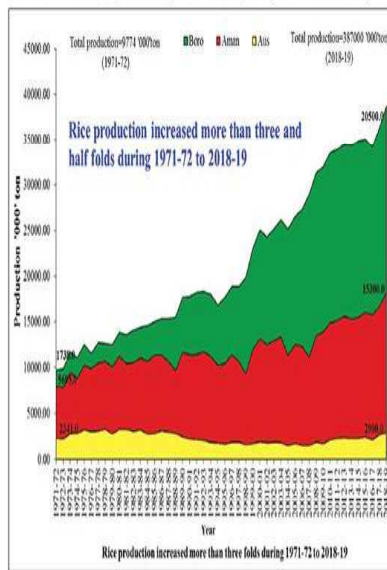
Initially, BRRI's main target was to produce more rice in less land and feeding the ever increasing population of the country. But with the increase of per-capita income and socio-economic condition, demand and taste of the people have changed. Now, they prefer finer and more nutritious rice. Moreover, Bangladesh will have to fulfil the goals of SDG by 2030, and one of the important goals of SDG is doubling the productivity along with nutritious and safe food. So, BRRI has given special emphasis on producing nutrient enriched and export quality premium rice varieties. With yield contributing attributes, scientists are giving more importance on nutrient attributes in on-going and future rice research and development plan.

BRRI has so far developed and released 102 modern varieties (95 Inbred and 7 Hybrid) of them 24 are stress tolerant of which 10 are saline tolerant, three submergence, three drought, four cold, two tidal submergence, one semi-deep water and one dual tolerant

(Sal+Sub). In addition, 13 premium quality, five Zn-enriched and three Low GI (Glycaemic Index) rice for diabetic patients have been developed. It is reported that, more than 80 per cent of total rice area of the country has been covered by BRRI released variety and its contribution to national rice production is about 91 per cent.

We know, Rice is a major crop in Bangladesh which provides >70 per cent calories and >65 per cent protein. Therefore, rice is not just only a food or commodity for Bangladeshis but it is the daily necessities for the people. We used to say, Rice is life in Bangladesh. If we failed to produce sufficient rice, millions of people would have been food refugees and crores of people could die. Moreover, we would have had to spend most of our domestic income for importing food and feed. But instead of struggling for food and poverty reduction, Bangladesh is now showing courage to implement million dollars projects from its national income. Among other key development indicators, this has been visualized by world famous media "South China Morning Post" in a piece titled - "The Big Story: The Rise and Rise of Bangladesh". But behind the entire success indicator the biggest secret was our persistent food security. So behind the big story we want to say "Rice is Rise in Bangladesh".

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ments are 36.5, 42.0 and 44.8 million tons respectively, to meet the demand of 180, 203 and 215 million people. To achieve those said milestones, our production target would be 40, 44 and 48 million tons respectively, having a surplus of about 3.0 MT per year. Using our high yielding new varieties and new

erage rice yield in South Asia as per world standard. During 2019-20 production years, Bangladesh is going to clinch third place beating Indonesia in global rice production with an increased output of 38.54 million tons enabling surplus of 4.0 MT meeting requirements for 167.0 million people, in-