



# **SEMINAR ON CASH FOR RICE**

## **BANGLADESH AS A RICE EXPORTER**

THIS SEMINAR TOOK PLACE IN DECEMBER 14, 2013 AT 'POLICY RESEARCH INSTITUTE' (PRI), BANANI, DHAKA.

# SEMINAR ON CASH FOR RICE

## BANGLADESH AS A RICE EXPORTER

Dr. Salim Rashid welcomed everyone on the third seminar of Compact Township Foundation. He mentioned the seminar would follow a roundtable format and the issue of turning Bangladesh into a rice exporting country would be discussed here. He also mentioned the necessity of analytical discussion of bureaucratic system that exists in the market and drives the economy and the law of the country which remains unimplemented.

He mentioned the price of rice is a vital factor in the economy of the country. If the price rises, the land value also ascends with it and the people associated with the business becomes richer.

He referred to a statement that showed near about 8 million people are urban middle class who do not have any relation with agricultural land are needed to be considered.

Research and innovation are needed for producing rice in all the contexts in Bangladesh. Bangladesh can become self-sufficient if we can control the bureaucratic market economy and the organizational problems of technical research can be resolved.

In the discussion a question was raised about the incoming remittance from abroad in the country.

Due to the lack of opportunity to invest in proper sector, families those are earning remittance are buying more lands and as a consequence the price of land value is increasing. This affects the rice production and market economy.

## RICE AND THE ECONOMY

Bangladesh currently produces enough rice to feed itself. But we can produce another 20 mmt. If we sell this additional rice at the world market price of, say, Tk60/kg, our farmers can earn 1,200,000 million taka every year. What holds us back? Bangladeshi farmers will produce this extra rice for export if offered the world price.

Mr. Ruhul Amin stated that people living in the villages now are more concerned about the economic issues. The farmers can decide what crops and plants would be beneficiary for them.

He stated in 1993 'Rice Export Cell' was launched by Mr. Ershadul Haq and it attracted the business persons. An export team from Thailand showed interest to buy the surplus rice from Bangladesh. But the following government withdrew the 'Rice Export Cell' when it came to power and hence the whole process was cancelled.



Production of wheat which was once promoted by the government eventually went to private sectors. The rate of production and supply had comparatively increased. Current statistics shows that the production of wheat is 85 million of metric ton which is adequate for the country.

In response to Mr. Ruhul Amin, Mr. Najmul Hossain said that a feeling of food insecurity comes up every time with the change of government.

He mentioned that Bangladesh imports chickpeas mostly from Australia and the production price there is minimal. If we can store the products in cold storage there and import here in time the price would not be so high. The government definitely needs to set up a policy in this regard.

Professor Z Karim said that currently there has been a lot of studies conducted by the NGO's and researchers, and the statistical figures can show the holistic view of improvement in agricultural sectors.

“The economic return of the poor farmers are also needed to draw to their attention. Because, at the end of the day these poor farmers are earning a very little profit as return. Again the field of producing wheat and poultry is increasing day by day in Bangladesh. The other non-rice market acts are needed to be analyzed. The amount of subsidy, support needed in the manufacturing and service sectors are needed to be sort out to prioritize infrastructure.

Mr. Mahbub Jamil said the recent trend of politicizing every issues in our country makes the scenario tough in decision making process. Again each year the syndicates make artificial crisis in the market which affects the farmers directly. He shared his idea that bureaucratic decision can solve a lot of problems. But the reality is the bureaucrats cannot take any decisions that collides with the political parties.

To export rice, the relation of rice production and marketing with the population needs to be justified. Agricultural lands are decreasing with the increase of urbanization process. How we can protect the agricultural lands and give support to the farmers at the same time is needed to be assessed. Again the process of how we can regain the cultivable lands which are acquired by the urban rich people is needed to be identified.

Mr. Najmul, said the researches that are being carried out in the agricultural sectors are wonderful. Bangladesh is already meeting a lot of solutions form the researches. He proposed the government can state a certain amount of rice production for export, thus the farmers can balance between the needs and surplus.

He also thinks that our Government is not efficient in importing one metric ton of rice. By engaging the private sectors the more efficiency can be earned.

In respond to this statement, Mr. Mahbub Jamil said that there should be a regulatory commission to control and maintain these sectors.

Mr. Abdul Muyeed Chowdhury replied that for exporting the government first need to open this sector and then fix the criteria for the exporters.

Government is taking no steps to materialize the outcomes from the seminars. A definite commitment in this sector is necessary. By creating brands and promoting the market factors it is possible for the government to overcome other qualitative problems. At the political commitments are needed to be fulfilled by the government.

The policies generated by the government has never targeted the youths. We should try to be more focused on how we can facilitate the young generation in more productive works. Also by implementing the proper use of technological advancement in the respective fields can facilitate more production. Last of all the young generation should be treated accordingly to serve the country and not leave it.



Mr. Abdul Muyeed Chowdhury replied that the REB has commercialized the deep tubewell for agricultural purposes where decision has not been changed yet. He also said the urban middle class

People are not involved with the agricultural lands or agro sectors. As consumers they might not get benefited with the advancement of agricultural sectors. How we can facilitate the urban middle classes to agricultural sectors is a subject that needs to be analyzed.

Mr. Najmul Hossain stated his opinion to set up a formal meeting with the FBCCI with this subject to let the business community take necessary strategies to increase the productions in a secured way and to attain development through agriculture.

Mr. Mahbub Jamil opined that if the government can make decision to decrease the current rate of fertilizers, a compensation can be made for the factories and industries.

Dr. Salim Rashid summarized the discussion in his conclusive speech. He said that it is possible to earn about 150 thousand crore taka profit from this sector and the decision is on the hand of the people. Advancement in this sector can directly affect the employment sectors. The politicians must decide to facilitate the rice production sector.