

U. S. AGENCY FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT  
 DACCA, BANGLADESH

MEMORANDUM

To : Mr. Charles H. Antholt, Chief, Food & Agr. February 6, 1980  
 Thru : Mr. Arnold J. Radi, Agriculture Advisor, F& Ag. Div.  
 From : ~~Mr. Arnold J. Radi~~  
 Akhter U. Ahmed, Agriculture Development Specialist, F&A  
 Subject : Agricultural Activities in Pabna, Rajshahi and Bogra Districts

I made a field trip to Pabna, Rajshahi and Bogra Districts from January 28 thru February 3, 1980 to observe the condition of standing crops and fertilizer situation in those areas. This report embodies my own observations, views of farmers and BDG officials.

Wheat:

In 1978-79, Pabna, Rajshahi and Bogra Districts accounted for 23 percent (Pabna; 8%, Rajshahi, 10% ; Bogra 5%) of total wheat acreage in Bangladesh. Total production of last year's wheat was 106,949 tons in these three districts. As years go by, the farmers are cultivating more and more wheat. According to the District Extension (Agriculture) officials, area sown under wheat in these three districts increased about 182 percent (166% in Pabna; 172% in Rajshahi; 226% in Bogra) over last year's actual acreage. The following table shows this year's sown area and last year's actual area and production of wheat in these districts:

<u>Districts</u>	<u>Area Sown In 1979-80 (Acres)</u>	<u>Actual Area In 1978-79 (Acres)</u>	<u>Production in 1978-79 (Tons)</u>
Pabna	142,000	53,375	39,633
Rajshahi	178,000	65,430	37,812
Bogra	<u>110,000</u>	<u>33,720</u>	<u>29,504</u>
Total :	430,000	152,525	106,949

The standing wheat crop was at seedling to heading stage in different areas. Some farmers have grown wheat after aus/jute, so they could sow wheat by November, which is the right time for sowing to get high yields. Late harvesting of t.aman this year delayed sowing of wheat where wheat was a successive crop to t.aman. In Pabna District, about 75 percent of wheat is cultivated under non-irrigated

(rain-fed) condition. Rain at the end of November and in early January was very much helpful for wheat, which also contributed in increasing wheat acreage. One can hardly notice any fallow land in Pabna and in the southern part of Rajshahi. In Bogra District, Dhumot, Shariakandi, Shibganj and part of Sherpur Thanas are the main wheat growing areas. Many farmers in these areas irrigated wheat fields by hand tubewells. The District Extension Officer, Bogra, reported that the potentiality of hand tubewell irrigation in Bogra District is very high. Hand tubewell irrigation is most suitable for wheat since it requires much less water (about one fifth) than boro.

Wheat seed supply by BADC is inadequate. Many farmers could not grow wheat due to the scarcity of seed. In some places, one maund of BADC seed was sold at Tk. 400 while the official price is Tk. 180 per maund. If the wheat program is to continue expanding rapidly, more imports of seed is necessary, and at the same time, development of efficient and appropriate seed preservation technology for the farmers is an urgent need, so that the farmers can provide an increased proportion of the seed required.

I visited BADC's Tebnia Seed Multiplication Farm in Pabna. Mr. Kazi Nizamul Alam, Chief Farm Superintendent reported that 183 acres of farm land are under wheat cultivation for seed in this season, of which 142 acres are under Sonalika and the rest 41 acres are under Inia-66, Jupatico, Balaka and Norteno varieties. In addition, contract growers (controlled by Tebnia Farm) are cultivating wheat in about 2,500 acres for seed production for BADC. The seed produced at Tebnia farm and procured from the contract growers are processed at the Seed Processing Center (near Tebnia farm) and then despatched to different districts.

I visited the Regional Agricultural Research Station, Ishurdi and observed the experimental varieties of wheat in the research plots. There are about 3,000 lines of numerous varieties on 8 acres of net experimental area. At present emphasis is mainly on screening and selection of materials grown in the research fields. Selections are made on the basis of yield, maturity, disease resistance, quality and other agronomical characters such as plant height, tillering, head type etc. Experiments are conducted on both irrigated and non-irrigated conditions. The main objective of research work is to recommend improved varieties for general cultivation. Last year, BARI recommended three new wheat varieties, namely, Pavon, Balaka and Doel, suitable for cultivation in Bangladesh.

**Boro:**

In 1978-79, Pabna, Rajshahi and Bogra Districts accounted for only 7 percent (Pabna, 1%; Rajshahi, 4%; Bogra, 2%) of total boro acreage in Bangladesh. Total production of last year's boro rice was 156,425 tons in these three districts, which was only 8 percent of total boro rice production in Bangladesh. Transplanting of boro was going on and in some places it was at early growth stage. In Rajshahi District, much of the new wheat acreage is presumed to be coming out of the area formerly used for boro cultivation. However Mr. Rafique Ahmed, District Extension Officer, Bogra reported that increased wheat area may not affect boro since irrigated area (mainly by deep tube wells) also increased where boro can be grown.

**Sugarcane:**

Rajshahi District is the highest sugarcane producing area in Bangladesh. Rajshahi, Pabna and Bogra Districts account for 21%, 7% and 5% of total sugarcane acreage in Bangladesh respectively. At the time of my visit, most of the sugarcane has been harvested, and sugarcane sets have been planted. About 25% of sugarcane is grown from ratoon. I visited a sugarcane purchase center in Rajshahi. Employees of Rajshahi Sugar Mill were purchasing sugarcane from the farmers at the rate of Tk. 12 per maund. Farmers reported that they do not want to sell sugarcane to mills, instead, they want to make molasses from sugarcane which is much more profitable. But making molasses in mill area is prohibited by law.

**Other Winter Crops:**

Rainfall in the flowering stage of mustard reduced yields in some places. However, late sown mustard was not affected. Lentil and gram were in flowering stage, and the condition looked good in general. Good acreage of onion was also noticed.

**Fertilizer:**

I visited BADC's District Managers' offices in Pabna, Rajshahi and Bogra Districts and collected information on fertilizer sales and on stock positions. The following tables show the progressive sales (July 79 - January 15, 1980) as compared to sales in 1978-79, and fertilizer stock positions.

**Fertilizer Sales Comparisons Between 1978-79 and 1979-80**

**Progressive Sales (July 78 - January 15, 1979)**

(In Tons)

<u>Districts</u>	<u>Urea</u>	<u>DAP</u>	<u>TSP</u>	<u>MP</u>	<u>Other</u>	<u>Total</u>
Pabna	12051	-	6,382	1,233	47	19,713
Rajshahi	13,090	5	8,641	1,788	-	23,524
Bogra	18,501	1	8,087	2,167	-	28,756
<b>Total :</b>	<b>43,642</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>23,110</b>	<b>5,188</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>71,993</b>

**Progressive Sales (July 79 - January 15, 1980)**

<u>Districts</u>	<u>Urea</u>	<u>DAP</u>	<u>TSP</u>	<u>MP</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>Percent Change Over 1978-79 Sales</u>
Pabna	11,940	2,847	4,720	881	20,388	+ 3%
Rajshahi	16,918	3,624	8,272	2,092	30,906	+ 31%
Bogra	19,558	3,010	6,953	2,074	31,595	+ 10%
<b>Total :</b>	<b>48,416</b>	<b>9,481</b>	<b>19,945</b>	<b>5,047</b>	<b>82,889</b>	<b>+ 15%</b>

**Fertilizer Stock Position on January 15, 1980**

<u>Districts</u>	<u>Urea</u>	<u>DAP</u>	<u>TSP</u>	<u>MP</u>	<u>Other</u>	<u>Total</u>
Pabna	5,862	44	1,158	1,289	-	8,353
Rajshahi	6,224	43	959	1,818	10	9,054
Bogra	5,843	37	1,315	1,654	12	8,861
<b>Total :</b>	<b>17,929</b>	<b>124</b>	<b>3,432</b>	<b>4,761</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>26,268</b>

The tables show that fertilizer sales have increased moderately in 1979-80 as compared to 1978-79 sales. The District Managers reported that scarcity of TSP prevails in all areas, the supply of TSP is inadequate to meet the demand. There is also good demand for DAP by the farmers but there is no supply.

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