



Commercialisation of agriculture

Improved water management driving reductions in poverty

Context: agriculture in coastal Bangladesh

The Blue Gold Program (BGP) works in the polders of Bangladesh.

This coastal zone is disaster-prone, and highly vulnerable to environmental challenges, including floods, waterlogging, salinity, fresh water scarcity, and drought.

- Agriculture and fisheries production are the backbone of the polder economy, constituting 60-70% of household incomes.
- Adverse climate and water conditions are at the root of low agricultural productivity and profitability, and have many households oscillating in and out of poverty.



Challenges to agricultural development



Flooding and waterlogging during rainy seasons, and a lack of fresh water and soil salinity during dry seasons, constrain cropping systems. This discourages increased investments by farmers



Household decision-making and agricultural activities are subsistence-oriented. Farmer decision-making is characterised by risk-averse practices, limited market orientation, and underdeveloped market linkages



The market system, or supporting network of input and service providers, buyers and traders, is rudimentary and small-scale. Extension services are in short supply, and do not focus on market linkages. There is a need for systemic change



BGP interventions

Necessary changes

Farmers need to commercialise to reach the full agricultural production potential arising from changing water management conditions. Their adaptive capacity must be enhanced

The market linkages of the farmers must mature. Access to goods, services and information need to expand

The market system, comprising of goods, service and information providers, and buyers needs to adapt to changing agricultural practices

Increasing the effectiveness of coastal extension



Technology transfers aligned to water management conditions

Supported by practical research

Cropping system perspective in sessions and demonstrations

Market orientation: farming as a business

Development of linkages with market actors

Facilitating the broader market system to adapt



Differentiation of extension services



Interacting with groups



Demand driven messages



Demonstrations, trials, and get-togethers



Using the local resource network



Making sources of information more accessible



Horizontal learning



Involving private sector actors and companies



**More
comprehensive
and efficient
mix of extension
approaches**



Outcomes

আল-মাসা

Impact of economic growth in polders



Growth of agricultural production through increases in yields, cropping intensity, and diversification



Along with farm production, incomes and labour requirements have increased. This then boosts trading volumes and service demand, resulting in more jobs and higher non-farm incomes




Labour remuneration and land leases have increased with higher productivity



In some areas, higher productivity and profitability were foregone by farmers opting for more equitable outcomes instead



Cost benefit analyses show that overall returns to cropping system improvements justify large-scale infrastructure investments



Blue Gold finds that once farmers are benefitting from increased productivity and profitability, they are more readily inclined to safeguard those gains by organising the operation and maintenance of their water infrastructures.



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