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Issue-4
July 2018

BLUE GOLD TRENDS WATCHER

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'AGRICULTURE AS A BUSINESS' IMPACTED IN INCREASING HOUSEHOLD INCOME IN POLDER 22, KHULNA

Polder-22 has a long history of conflict between farmers and shrimp cultivators within polder while a general trend of returning towards agricultural production has always been there. From the very beginning of BGP arrival into this polder, this positive trend was observed very enthusiastically and various programs were taken by projecting farmers' desire to return to agriculture. BGP also observed that the Polder-22 is very remote and isolated from existing agri-markets. After successful conduction of FFS (Farmers' Field School) and MFS (Market Oriented Farmers' Field School) along with water infrastructure related works, BGP connected farmers (especially who are involved in growing and selling high-value crops e.g. Watermelon at present) to a steady pool of suppliers and buyers. Through MFS, BGP also promoted the concept "Agriculture as a Business" as an approach that enables farmers of small plots to take advantage of market opportunities by forming production groups and collective actions. These WMGs are then able to generate sufficient volume for commercial activities, reducing transportation and other costs; these collective business ideas also created social and business networks that enable peers to share market information, along with modern agricultural methods and techniques through WMGs.

Initially, it was observed, that the farmers cultivate red sesame as a high value crop. BGP advised farmers to cultivate black sesame instead of the red variety, considering higher value of the former in international as well as the local markets. BGP also facilitated establishment of Sesame Collection Center within polder area, and thus, producers get markets/buyers (who export sesame) at their doorsteps. As a result, farmers got high level of profit from sesame cultivation. Unfortunately in the following years, the market price of sesame at international and local markets suddenly declined. On the other hand, sesame fields were extremely damaged due to untimely and unexpected heavy rainfall for consecutive years. As a result, farmers are inclined to

cultivate watermelon by adjusting with this whim of nature. BGP started taking necessary steps for ensuring proper guideline and water management for cultivating watermelon. The success of agricultural work depends largely on the quality of the good agricultural inputs, sufficient water for irrigation, skilled workers, agricultural machinery and other time-bound environments. Particularly the role of good seed for good crop production is undeniable. Dragon and Pakija are the names of most popular seeds of watermelon in Khulna region. Blue Gold Program helped RFs (Resource Farmers) and WMG members to develop linkages with Syngenta Seed Company and AR Malik Seed Company; as a result, RFs and WMG members have decided not to buy low quality seeds at a higher price from local retailers. Under the leadership of RFs/FTIs, a total of 432 WMG members as well as farmers collectively purchased better quality



Collection of Watermelon for Marketing

watermelon seeds (32 kg dragon and 25kg

pakija seeds) directly from those companies. As a result, the members of WMGs saved BDT 1,82,400 (one lac eighty two thousand four hundred taka) that significantly reflected into the net profit after selling their field production. In the rabi season there was a minimum amount of water reserves against the actual demand of water for irrigation. Hence, for the convenience of cultivating watermelon, BGP encouraged farmers to excavate small ponds to meet the huge demand of irrigation water during the rabi season. As a result, the WMG members excavated nearly 500 ponds to ensure water storage for irrigation, which has almost filled up the demand for irrigation water in the rabi season. DAE is also running Farmers' Field School (FFS) for providing technical knowledge and efficiency, which has played an important role in cultivation. PLEASE SEE PAGE-6

Blue Gold Program is Implemented by-
Bangladesh Water Development Board (BWDB)
&
Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE)

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Blue Gold Program Wiki

The wiki version of the Lessons Learnt Report of the Blue Gold program, documents the experiences of a technical assistance (TA) team working in a development project implemented by the Bangladesh Water Development Board (BWDB) and the Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE) over an eight+ year period from March 2013 to December 2021. The wiki lessons learnt report (LLR) is intended to complement the BWDB and DAE project completion reports (PCRs), with the aim of recording lessons learnt for use in the design and implementation of future interventions in the coastal zone.

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