



Come forward to invest, Bangladesh tells FAO Investment Forum

Minister of Agriculture Abdur Razzaque sought international investment targeting food processing and exports when he attended FAO's Investment Forum. FAO Representative in Bangladesh Robert D. Simpson accompanied the delegation to the event, held on 18-19 October, at FAO's headquarters in Rome, Italy.

The Investment Forum was hosted as part of the World Food Forum at which Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina made an address. It is the core of the partnership-building element of FAO's Hand-in-Hand Initiative. Governments of the 20 most progressed Hand-in-Hand countries pitched their priority projects to possible partners ranging from multilateral institutions such as the World Bank to companies and impact investors.

The Hand-in-Hand Initiative supports the implementation of nationally-led programmes that are designed to accelerate the market-based transformation of agrifood systems to eradicate poverty, end hunger and malnutrition, and reduce inequalities. Robert D. Simpson said: "Bangladesh's agri-food sector has huge potential for investors. By bringing this potential to the attention of investors, Bangladesh will be better placed to secure the funding needed to accelerate its plans for agricultural transformation."

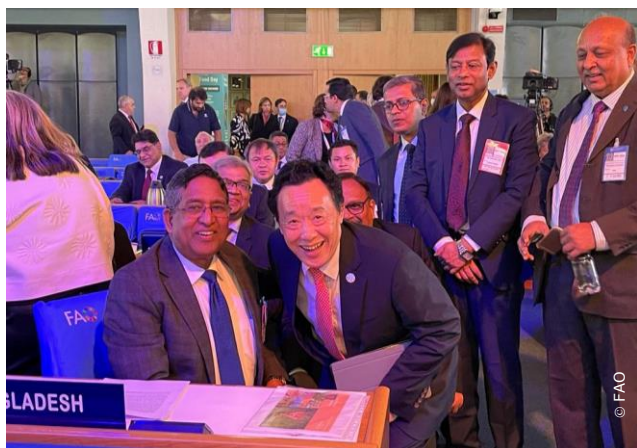
Bangladesh has already catalyzed important funding through Hand-in-Hand, receiving USD 500 million from the World Bank and USD 43 million from the International Fund for Agricultural Development.

Speaking at the event, Dr. Razzaque said that Bangladesh has achieved unprecedented success in agricultural production but that the agriculture sector lagged behind in processing and exporting products where there is huge potential. Bangladesh is prioritizing four sectors for development and investment: cold storage and post-harvest management, agricultural products processing and marketing, climate-smart agriculture, and irrigation and water management. Bangladesh does not have sufficient technology and cold storage to store fruits and vegetables, including onions, mangoes and tomatoes, he said, adding that 25 to 40 percent of these products are wasted at the post-harvest stage. Highlighting the benefits of investment in infrastructure, the minister urged 'come forward to invest'.

QU Dongyu, Director-General of FAO, said at the opening of the Investment Forum that the Hand-in-Hand Initiative responds to the need of countries to invest in long-term food security and poverty reduction which was particularly important in the light of ongoing international conflict and the coronavirus pandemic.

HIGHLIGHTS

- **FAO Representative accompanies Agriculture Minister to FAO's Hand-in-Hand Investment Forum in Rome.**
- **Prime Minister addresses World Food Day celebration.**
- **New five-year Country Programming Framework signed.**
- **Huge stockpile of pesticide DDT being sent to Europe for safe disposal after decades in city centre storage.**
- **Emergency assistance for farming households affected by severe floods.**
- **First Bangladesh veterinary Olympiad.**



Minister for Agriculture Abdur Razzaque (front left) with FAO Director-General QU Dongyu at the Hand-in-Hand Investment Forum in Rome.

Prime Minister joins World Food Day celebration

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina highlighted the impact of international conflict on agri-food systems during a World Food Day ceremony in Dhaka.

It was the third year in a row that she had made an address to mark the day. Three ministers attended the event, namely Mohammad Shahab Uddin, Minister of Environment, Forest, and Climate Change; SM Rezaul Karim, Minister of Fisheries and Livestock; and Sadhan Chandra Majumder, Minister of Food. Minister of Agriculture Razzaque was in Rome with FAO Representative Robert D. Simpson for the FAO Hand-in-Hand Investment Forum.

With the theme ‘Leave no one behind: Better production, better nutrition, a better environment and a better life’, this World Food Day was marked in a year with multiple global challenges, including the ongoing pandemic, geo-political conflict, climate change, and rapidly rising prices. All of these challenges are affecting global food security but Bangladesh has proved resilient and has continued to build on its impressive achievements.

Sadly, far too many people are still being left behind. With less than a decade to 2030, we are not on track to ending world hunger and malnutrition – in fact, we are moving in the wrong direction. The number of people facing acute food insecurity and requiring urgent life-saving food assistance and livelihood support continues to grow at an alarming rate. Last year, around 193 million people in 53 countries or territories experienced acute food insecurity – an increase of nearly 40 million people compared with the already record numbers of 2020. Echoing these challenges, the Prime Minister urged the international community to stop war, food politics, and food waste.

FAO’s Saso Martinov, Senior Technical Advisor, delivered a speech on behalf of the Representative. He highlighted

FAO’s commitment to accelerating the pace of agricultural transformation in Bangladesh. He said: “In partnership with the Ministry of Agriculture, the Ministry of Food, and the Ministry of Fisheries and Livestock, FAO has this year continued to promote policy actions, digitalization, safe and environmentally-sound production, and market linkages, to the benefit of smallholder farmers and consumers. We remain focused on innovation and look forward to scaling up these successful initiatives.” He thanked the Ministry of Agriculture for its commitment to World Food Day.

After a gap of two years, United Nations Day was celebrated in-person on 24 October in Dhaka. The new UN Resident Coordinator to Bangladesh, Gwyn Lewis, provided the opening remarks of the event which was compered by FAO’s Ehsan Kabir.



FAO’s Saso Martinov (right) at the World Food Day event.

New five-year Country Programming Framework

A fresh chapter in FAO-Bangladesh cooperation was marked with the signing of a new five-year Country Programming Framework (CPF). The CPF 2022-26 for Bangladesh is a strategic planning and management tool that provides FAO with a sound basis for developing its mid-term country programme, in line with the policies and development priorities of the government. Innovation, inclusivity, and green growth are at the heart of FAO’s plan to drive change in the food and agricultural sectors.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina approved the key document which prioritizes sustainable and green agri-economic growth with a focus on women and youth, as well as the delivery of healthy, safe and nutritious food.

The CPF was signed by Fatima Yasmin, Secretary, Economic Relations Division, Ministry of Finance, on behalf of the Government of Bangladesh. Representative Robert D. Simpson, who signed on behalf of FAO, said: “This CPF will build on the successes of our several decades of partnership with the Government of Bangladesh, as we enter a new phase of collaboration that focuses on climate

resilient and sustainable agriculture, food exports, inclusivity, and nutrition security. Investing in science and research, and embracing digitalization, will be the key to accelerating progress even further.”

The CPF 2022-26 sets out FAO’s strategic priorities, key areas of technical cooperation, and medium-term country-level programming activities. It aligns with the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) 2022-2026, the 8th Five Year Plan, the 2030 Agenda, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and the Perspective Plan for 2041. It also reflects FAO’s Strategic Framework 2022-2031 which seeks to support the 2030 Agenda through the transformation to more efficient, inclusive, resilient and sustainable agri-food systems for better production, better nutrition, a better environment, and a better life.

Since Bangladesh joined FAO in 1973, FAO has implemented some 350 technical assistance projects in the country with a combined budget of USD 400 million. The new CPF, which has an indicative budget of USD 125 million, will further drive investment and support FAO’s technical assistance.

Investing in agricultural transformation

The Ministry of Agriculture, in collaboration with FAO, held a series of regional consultation workshops on investment for agricultural transformation. The workshops were held in Rajshahi, Barisal, Comilla, Jessore, and Mymensingh. Participants included representatives from the government, the private sector, producer organizations, research and academia.

The consultation workshops were organized, as part of the build-up to FAO’s Investment Forum, in order to identify priorities and investment areas that are of importance to farmers and food producers. Through the workshop, agri-thematic areas such as cold storage and post-harvest management, agro processing and marketing, climate smart agriculture, and irrigation and water management, were identified as key investment priorities to facilitate sector transformation.

Strengthening agricultural production and income opportunities through agricultural transformation reduces poverty, ensures sustainable food security, and improves livelihoods for deprived communities in climate-variable locations.

Speaking at the Mymensingh workshop, FAO Representative Robert D. Simpson said: “The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development clearly marks the path to prosperity. To leave no one behind, transformative action is required. Sustainable agriculture growth must be a part of this agenda.” The Minister of Agriculture, Abdur Razzaque, attended the workshop as chief guest.

Furthermore, FAO produced a series of videos for International Youth Day, highlighting the invaluable contribution of youth in helping to modernize Bangladesh’s agricultural sector. The campaign included the founder of iFarmer and students from Sher-e-Bangla Agricultural University. More than 30 000 people were reached through FAO’s Facebook page.

Digital solutions

With a growing population and facing climate change challenges, digital agriculture can deliver Bangladesh with the boost in productivity that is needed to secure food and nutrition security for decades to come. This was one of the main points of a workshop, organised by FAO and Aspire to Innovate (a2i), to discuss emerging opportunities for digital agriculture in Bangladesh. FAO Senior Economist Carlo Bravi gave a presentation on how digital technology is being used to improve food system sustainability. Representative Robert D. Simpson told participants: “Digital transformation is already here and it’s here to stay. FAO is committed to assisting governments and partners to ensure that everyone benefits.”

Earlier in the year, Representative Robert D. Simpson met Zunaid Ahmed Palak, Minister for Information and Communication Technology, to discuss plans to modernize the agriculture sector using digital technology. They both emphasized the importance of expanding agricultural research and innovation to boost smart farming. The ICT Division and FAO agreed to prepare a plan for digitalization of agriculture. The minister said it would not be possible to meet rising food demand without the use of modern technology.

Minister Palak also visited an FAO digital village and aggregation centre in Cox’s Bazar to show his support for smallholder farmers and to see for himself how they are making use of new digital extension and financial services.

Smallholder farmers connected with FAO’s digital village initiative have access to various e-services from the government and private sector and can take advantage of digital literacy training. The centres also serve as information exchange hubs for farmers. The aim of the digital villages is to improve productivity and profitability.

There are 60 digital villages across Barishal, Rangpur, and Cox’s Bazar. They are operated by producer organisations which run 57 virtual call centres to aggregate produce for collective marketing and facilitation of bulk procurement of agricultural inputs.

Nearly 50 farmers and community members attended the event at Tulatoli village in Ukhiya, along with officials from the Department of Agricultural Extension and partner organization Aspire to Innovation (a2i).

Dhaka farmers' markets prove a success

The Dhaka Food System project has established 12 farmers' markets across Dhaka with a plan to launch four more. The markets are providing hundreds of farmers with the opportunity to sell fresh, organic fruit and vegetables of the highest quality direct to the public. The project, funded by the Kingdom of the Netherlands, launched the joint initiative with the four city corporations (Dhaka North, Dhaka South, Gazipur City, and Narayanganj City), and Work for a Better Bangladesh Trust.

All of the food is grown without chemicals and pesticides using good agricultural practice (GAP). The Department of Agriculture Extension (DAE) and the Department of Agriculture Marketing trained all of the farmers on safe food production. DAE endorses the produce which adheres to strict hygiene and safety standards. The markets are temporary, can be held one or several days a week, and are set up in public spaces. Thirty farmers are assigned to each market. They take it in turn to sell, with ten opening stalls each week.

As the city grows, farm land become swallowed up by development meaning that food has to come from farther away. This often makes it more difficult for shoppers to access fresh local food. Selling directly helps farmers to improve their profits since they bypass middlemen. The markets also allow farmers and consumers to meet each other face-to-face while reducing the risk of coronavirus transmission compared to crowded indoor fresh markets.



One of the farmers' markets established by FAO.

Food systems – learning how the Thais and Aussies do it

Melbourne and Bangkok are renowned for the quality of their food. While many residents assume that they will always have access to good food, the leaders of both cities recognise that their food systems face serious challenges.

Bangladesh's national food priorities and policies will be inspired by the Dhaka Food Agenda 2041, which aims at making the city's food system more resilient, inclusive, and

sustainable. As part of a drive to achieve these aims, FAO's Dhaka Food System project organized a two-week study tour for select government officials to learn from the world renowned 'foodie' cities in Thailand and Australia.

The 18-strong delegation comprised of officials from the Local Government Division (LGD) of the Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development, and Cooperatives (MoLGRD&C); Ministry of Agriculture; Ministry of Food; and all four city corporations. They were joined by a representative from the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands. The tour was funded by the Netherlands and facilitated by Australia Awards.

The officials learnt about policies and best practices, seeing first-hand how successful food systems operate. The City of Melbourne food policy, for example, provides an overarching vision and framework that guides coordinated action and decision-making to improve the food system. Lessons learned from the tour will help to shape the Dhaka Food Agenda 2041 which will be led by the LGD and Dhaka's city corporations.

Improving diets for the very poorest

A quarter of the country's population live in extreme poverty and are chronically underfed. Government social safety net programmes provide food and cash in different combinations. The largest of these, the Food Friendly Programme, provides 30kg of rice per month per eligible family for several months.

But which type of assistance does most to improve dietary diversity for the ultra-poor? Would cash transfers have more impact and be more cost-effective than distribution of rice? FAO is carrying out an assessment to answer these questions.

A total of 750 families who receive assistance from the Food Friendly Programme are being surveyed. They are from two of the poorest districts of the country: Sunamganj in the north-east and Kurigram in the north. Both districts are classified as having severe chronic food and nutrition insecurity and suffer from floods and droughts.

The Meeting the Undernutrition Challenge project, funded by the European Union, in collaboration with the Food Planning and Monitoring Unit, Ministry of Food, is carrying out the assessment which will look at the impact of cash, vouchers, and in-kind assistance (direct food provision).

Based on the research, MUCH will make specific recommendations to the Ministry of Food for the formulation of the most effective ways to improve resilience and food security through social safety protection mechanisms. The two-month assessment will conclude at the end of November.

Huge DDT stockpile being sent to Europe

The first shipment of a huge pile of the banned pesticide Dichlorodiphenyltrichloroethane (DDT) – stored for decades in the centre of the country’s second largest city, posing a serious environmental and public health risk – finally left Bangladesh at the end of October.

The DDT is being sent to France where it will be processed safely. It was imported in 1985. The consignment, to combat malaria, was deemed non-compliant with the technical specification upon delivery and has been in storage at a government building in Chattogram ever since.

Specialists have now removed all 520 metric tons of the hazardous waste and made good progress cleaning and decontaminating the Medical Sub-Depot where it was stored. The DDT had been there so long that much of the original packaging had disintegrated, allowing some of the powder to escape into the environment.

FAO is assisting the Government of Bangladesh to carry out the complex operation. Removal of DDT is highly technical and is bound by international laws, rules and regulations. Twelve countries had to give permission for the waste to travel through their territory. No developing country has suitable facilities for safe disposal DDT.

The first of two planned shipments left port on 30 October. A further final shipment is expected before the end of the year. FAO consultant Mark Davis, an expert on obsolete pesticides, described the DDT cache as ‘highly unusual’. “This will be the largest amount of pesticide removed from a single location that I am aware of. It is also highly unusual in that the store is in the middle of an urban centre.”

The work is being undertaken through FAO’s Pesticide Risk Reduction in Bangladesh project, funded by the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and co-financed by the Government of Bangladesh and FAO. The project held a five-day workshop to train 20 officials how to assess sites contaminated by obsolete pesticides, as part of a commitment to build national capacity.



The packaged DDT to be loaded for shipment.

First Bangladesh veterinary Olympiad

Each year in Bangladesh around 1 000 students start veterinary education, yet there is very little interaction among the 13 veterinary schools. In an effort to improve dialogue, encourage teamwork, and foster professional development, the National Veterinary Dean Council (NVDC), in collaboration with FAO’s Emergency Centre for Transboundary Animal Diseases (ECTAD), organised the first Bangladesh Veterinary Olympiad, supported by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).

Each veterinary school held a qualifying round in early October. A total of 166 teams registered for the competition. Each gender-balanced team consists of five members, one from each academic level. The winning team from each veterinary school will take part in the final round of the national competition which will be held on 17 November in Cox’s Bazar.



Banner for the Bangladesh Veterinary Olympiad.

Bleak outlook for climate change impact on Bangladesh

A major new global climate change report, co-authored by an expert from the FAO country team, Muhammad Arfanuzzaman, paints a grim picture for Bangladesh. The *Sixth Assessment Report, Climate Change 2022: Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability* published by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), concludes that freshwater river areas are projected to decrease from 41 percent in 2012 to as low as 17 percent by 2050 under different sea-level rise scenarios. The IPCC is the international that body provides policymakers with regular assessments of the scientific basis of climate change, its impacts, future risks, and options for adaptation and mitigation.

Increased floods and droughts, along with heat stress, will have a negative influence on staple crop production, food availability, and food prices in South and Southeast Asia, leading to increased undernourishment in the region, including Bangladesh.

Nearly one-third of the country's power plants may need to be relocated by 2030 due to flooding. Sea level rise may force the displacement of one to two million people in southern Bangladesh by 2050, and yearly coastal flooding will affect 42 million people by mid-century. The report warns that climate change will inflict a two to nine percent hit to the country's economy.

Muhammad Arfanuzzaman stressed that Bangladesh must take action. He said: "To diminish the adverse climate impact, Bangladesh must focus on transformative and multi-sectoral measures, effective climate services, adaptation innovation, climate transparency, and locally-led nature-based solutions." He recommends that the Climate Vulnerable Forum (CVF), 'Vulnerable Twenty' countries (V20), and Global Center on Adaptation platforms should be utilized to foster collaboration, aid climate negotiations, and boost funding and technology transfer.

Government and FAO ramp up climate support

Considering Bangladesh's vulnerability to climate change, FAO is supporting the country to access climate finance from the Global Environment Facility (GEF), Green Climate Fund (GCF), Adaptation Fund, and other organisations through several initiatives.

As a part of FAO's climate transparency initiative, the GEF-supported project, Strengthening Capacity for Monitoring Environmental Emissions Under the Paris Agreement in Bangladesh, is working to establish a national measurement, reporting, and verification system for greenhouse gas inventory, adaptation and mitigation tracking mechanisms, institutional arrangements, and an enhanced transparency framework.

In addition, in support of GCF Readiness, the Strengthening Bangladesh's Nationally Designated Authority Secretariat, Enhancing Pipeline Implementation and Private Sector Engagement in Effective Climate Action project is strengthening country capacity to better identify, prioritize, and track climate adaptation and mitigation activities, investments, and results.

Landslide early warning system

Warnings used to be only possible a couple of hours before landslides struck but a new system developed by FAO can deliver warnings by email and mobile phone SMS messages up to five days in advance. FAO has been working to develop a Landslide Early Warning System (LEWS) in Cox's Bazar since 2020 with funding support from the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the Bureau of Humanitarian Assistance (BHA) of USAID.

Following trials, FAO developed the first prototype in 2021. High resolution satellite imageries were analysed to identify 890 of the most vulnerable sites in the region. Teams then collected field data from these sites and worked with local government officials and community leaders to develop the system.

This year the inventory team revisited 150 plots to reassess vulnerability levels and collected information from 407 new plots. FAO has now completed data collection and analysis and is updating the landslide susceptibility map. FAO has started collaboration with the Bangladesh Meteorological Department (BMD), under the Ministry of Defence, which has the legal authority to disseminate warning systems for use by the Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief (MoDMR). BMD has now hosted FAO's LEWS on its website.

A first for measuring resilience

Resilience measurement and analysis are critical for formulating evidence-based policy, programmes and investments for food security. At the household level, FAO has pioneered the development and the use of Resilience Index Measurement and Analysis (RIMA). RIMA is an innovative quantitative approach that aims to explain why and how some households cope with shocks and stressors better than others do.

FAO has conducted a RIMA study for the first time in Bangladesh. The study, conducted in Cox's Bazar, showed that households receiving agricultural support from FAO are more resilient than farmers who did not and that farmers with more land were more resilient than smallholder and marginal farmers. In the camps, Rohingya provided with homestead gardening support by FAO were more resilient than those who did not.

FAO and the World Food Programme (WFP) held a joint workshop with officials from eight ministries to discuss the potential use for FAO RIMA and WFP's Refugee Influx Emergency Vulnerability Assessment (REVA).

FAO plans to start data collection in November for a second phase of RIMA, conducted in collaboration with WFP, which will enhance the robustness of the study by increasing the sample size and geographic area coverage.

Improving Anticipatory Action capacity

'Anticipatory action' can minimize the impact of potential and predicted extreme climatic events. This approach establishes risk-monitoring systems linked to flexible finance and standard operating procedures by delivering support to protect people's lives and livelihoods ahead of forecasted shocks.

Floods occur so regularly in Bangladesh that anticipatory action needs to be embedded in resilience efforts. To this end, FAO conducted training for national and local government officials, humanitarian partners, and local stakeholders in two areas highly vulnerable to floods: Netrokona and Kishoreganj in the wetland Haor region. The training will improve anticipatory action planning and collaboration. FAO will continue to provide technical support to strengthen national and local AA capacity.

Flash flood emergency response

Millions of people were affected earlier this year by some of the most devastating floods in recent memory. Some of the worst affected areas were Sylhet, Sunamganj, Moulivazar, Habiganj, and Netrokona. The heavy rains swept away homes and flooded farmland. Vulnerable households from these communities are amongst the poorest in Bangladesh and often rely on income for daily labour or sales of agricultural produce.

It is estimated that more than 25 000 hectares of farmland were damaged, and 460 000 metric tons of production lost, affecting some 758 000 farmers. There was an estimated USD 35 million loss to the livestock sector and a USD 31 million loss to the fisheries sector, with many animals drowning, loss of fingerlings, and damage to infrastructure such as ponds.

The Prime Minister, and UN mission led by the Resident Representative, visited the flood-affected areas. UN agencies coordinated their response through a six-month Humanitarian Response Plan which will run until December.

FAO mobilized resources from the Special Fund for Emergency and Rehabilitation (SFERA) and the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) of the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) to provide emergency support to farmers in the most severely affected districts. Assistance distributions were underway at the end of October and it is planned that some 26 500 farmers will receive assistance by the end of November. The support will help farming households to restart food production as quickly as possible. The assistance includes livestock feed, micro-gardening packages, crop support packages, cash grants for fishers, pond rehabilitation, and technical training.



A farmer affected by floods receives livestock feed.

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