

Addressing Barriers to Rice Seeds Trade between India and Bangladesh (RISTE Project)

2nd PAC Meeting Report



1. Introduction

1.1 The second meeting of the Project Advisory Committee (PAC) under the RISTE project took place in the second half of 21st December, 2013 at the BRAC Center Inn, Dhaka, Bangladesh. The meeting was jointly organized by CUTS International and Unnayan Shamannay. The meeting was chaired by Mr. Bipul Chatterjee, Deputy Executive Director of CUTS International, and attended by members of the PAC, including Project Advisor and Former Sr. Scientist of IRRI Dr. Sushil Pandey. Project partner in Bangladesh, Unnayan Shamannay (US) was invited as special invitees. From US, the meeting was attended by Dr A.K. Enamul Haque, Project Team Leader, and other team members.

2. Objectives

2.1 There were six major objectives of the second PAC meeting:

- to take stock of the progress made over the last one year and to discuss about the achievement of planned activities and outputs that have already been produced;
- to appraise the progress made in dissemination of major outputs and related stakeholders cooperation;
- to understand reasons for relatively low cooperation from policymakers of India;
- to design ways and means for greater involvement with seed associations,
- to discuss and understand ambiguities relating to factors that hinder variety rice seeds trade, and
- to discuss and find out ways and means to redesign the results framework in the light of progress made over the last one year.

3. Participation

Out of the 12 member PAC, the following were present in the meeting:

1. Dr Sushil Pandey, Project Advisor and Former Sr. Scientist of IRRI
2. Mr Sushir Chandra Nath, Head, Agriculture and Food Security Program, BRAC, Dhaka, Bangladesh
3. Prof (Dr) Debduddh Behura, Rice Seed Expert, Orissa University of Agriculture and Technology, Orissa, India
4. Syed A.K.M, Asadul Amin, General secretary Bangladesh Seed Association, Bangladesh
5. Mr Bipul Chatterjee, Deputy Executive Director, CUTS International, Jaipur, India
6. Mr Suresh P Singh, Policy Analyst, CUTS International, Jaipur, India

Besides, the PAC meeting was also attended by special invitees from Unnayan Shamannay. They include:

1. Prof (Dr) Enamul Haque, Project Team Leader, Unnayan Shamannay, Dhaka
2. Dr Mahfuz Kabir, Senior Research Fellow, BIISS, Dhaka
3. Mr. Ashfaq R. Khan, Research Associate, Unnayan Shamannay, Dhaka
4. Md. Mahabub Hasan, Senior Research Associate, Unnayan Shamannay, Dhaka
5. Mr. Robert Shuvro Guda, Research Officer, Unnayan Shamannay, Dhaka
6. Mr. Shaheen ul Alam, Coordinator, Unnayan Shamannay, Dhaka

4. Opening Remarks

4.1 Mr. Bipul Chatterjee, in his opening remarks, thanked everyone for their participation in 2nd PAC meeting of RISTE project. He mentioned that when this project was launched, the concept and technical part of it was quite new to everyone. He especially thanked Unnayan Shamannay for their assistance in bringing clarity to the subject.



4.2 Mr Chatterjee talked about the results framework of the project that had been framed with very active cooperation from the members of the PAC, especially Dr Sushil Pandey and Mr Hari Menon. This framework now provides a greater clarity and focus to the project activities and outputs. He opined that the progress made so far with regard to implementation of activities and consultations held with stakeholders will facilitate greater interaction and cooperation between the two countries.

4.3 Pointing out the importance of cooperation in agriculture, he said, bilateral cooperation is the key for agricultural development in the two countries. Knowledge sharing and technology sharing are the keys to success in agricultural growth, he said.

4.4 On the issue of need for increasing productivity of rice seeds, he argued that both countries have to look at the demand and supply side of rice seeds more dynamically. The issue that should be addressed is bridging the existing demand and supply gap which is still prevailing. The demand of HYV rice seeds is increasing in both countries. The supply side of rice seeds is little bit tricky.

4.5 On the issue of support received from the two governments, he said, the cooperation from Ministry of Agriculture in Bangladesh side is much appreciable than that of Indian side. He informed that Indian agricultural ministry paid interest after going through the project documents.

4.6 With regard to barriers, he opined that there are no such tariff related barriers, however, there seems to be non-tariff barriers, hampering variety rice seed trade between both the countries. He requested members to suggest types of cooperation required to address this issue. Finally, he said that the knowledge sharing and bilateral trade can help to address the barriers in rice seeds trade.

5. Discussion

Several remarks and observations were made during this session. It was noted and emphasized by some members that there is a need for keeping the broader picture of long term cooperation between the two countries in mind while planning for revising activities and outputs of the project.

Dr. Sushil Pandey, in his speech thanked everyone for very useful discussion and emphasized on the result framework of project. He argued for inclusion of activities on factor driving other seeds trade to explore barriers that prevent trade in rice seed from occurring. He expected that further new challenges and issues would emerge from the International Conference along with new scopes of discussion.



Dr. Mahfuz Kabir, put greater focus on HYV seeds that are not formally channeled from India. Small numbers of hybrid varieties have been coming formally from India which is negligible compared to Chinese hybrid varieties. He found that the coverage area of hybrid are getting stagnant, rather declining – hybrid rice cultivation area increased to about 1.5 million hectare in 2008-2009 and now it comes down to 0.5 million hectare. This is because, the performance of the hybrid seed is not satisfactory in Bangladesh and farmers are not well accustomed to cultivation of hybrid seeds. He hoped that the advocacy strategies and paper materials would become more focused after inputs from the International Conference.



Mr. Sudhir Chandra Nath highlighted the fact that for the project to achieve its desired outcome, it is critical that germplasm or parent line exchange is focused. With regard to hybrid seeds, he noted that about 10-12 hybrid varieties are dominating and 9 out of 108 varieties are coming from India formally – Jhalak and Hira-5 are the Chinese hybrids that are well established in Bangladesh. The issues involving higher import of hybrid from China need not be a major issue of concern, as far as this project goes. Moreover, it is noted that preference for hybrid rice seeds among farmers is on the decline.



Mr. Asadul A. Dadan pointed out that several issues relating to import of hybrid seeds and its use in Bangladesh. He noted that the country is importing parent-line of seeds from China and developing seeds in a large volume locally. He revealed with concern that local people often generate fake seal of National Seed Board of India to sell the seeds around border areas. This needs to be improved. Cooperation between India and Bangladesh in variety rice seeds might have positive impacts on such malicious and harmful practices in the times to come, he opined.



Dr. Debdutt Behura corroborated the view expressed by Mr Dadan and said that huge volume of hybrid rice seeds are being imported from china. In comparison, import from India is negligible. He also noted that only the parent-line of hybrid seeds are coming and seeds are produced locally. With regard to variety rice seeds, he revealed that people informally sell the seeds to other side of borders and passing border through cycle. He suggested that we should explore and estimate the demand of informally imported seeds. Some activities in this regard have been undertaken by BRAC, which has been able to produce some data and research on this.



Mr. Ashfaq R. Khan emphasized given that both ways flows of variety rice seeds is the focus of the project, regulatory/ policy lessons from Bangladesh's rice seeds exports and Indian's import of hybrid rice seeds should be also included in the results framework. This might require slight modification in the results framework. He opposed with the assumption 'adequate domestic capacity to produce HYV rice seeds in India and their export' explicitly stated in the results framework on the ground that some states in eastern India are seed deficit. He suggested running an experiment of import and exporting exercise between India and Bangladesh which will reveal the barriers.

