

NGO STRESSES ON BILATERAL RICE TRADE

'INDIA, BANGLADESH SHOULD START FORMAL TRADE IN RICE SEEDS'

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
Kolkata, 5 June

A non-profit body has stressed on starting a bilateral trade of rice seeds between India and Bangladesh to cut-down on the informal trading of seeds in the border districts as this will ensure that farmers in both the countries get high yielding varieties of rice seeds.

A study conducted by Centre for International Trade, Economics and Environment (CUTS) on rais-

ing awareness on the issues relating to the trade of rice seeds between India and Bangladesh has revealed that a large number of farmers in Bangladesh and India suffer from lack of access to high yielding varieties (HYV) of rice seeds. This in turn affects their livelihood.

"To address this problem, a mutual recognition of the HYV rice seeds by both the countries is an immediate need. A formal trade of rice seeds will also better the livelihood of the farmers at both ends," said Mr Suresh

P Singh, policy analyst at CUTS.

"If formal trading channels are put in place, both the countries would get earnings from the exports," said Mr P Singh. According to Indian Council of Agricultural Research, formal trade between the two countries will facilitate gains in terms of market opportunity estimated at more than US \$20 million and an improved crop yield ranging from 10 to 15 per cent. Currently, there are barriers on bilateral trade of rice seeds with

exports being restricted and import limited to 3 kg per variety/ per year that too only for trial.

Mr Singh further said that farmers in West Bengal and some other states use smuggled rice seeds from Bangladesh and vice versa.

"Non-certified or poor quality seeds are illegally traded to Bangladesh and farmers plants these seeds. Often these low quality seeds affects rice yields," said Mr Debojyoti Guha, secretary, Seeds Association of Bengal.