

Stunning story of Bangladesh's agricultural transformations



Agriculture is a labour-intensive profession. For this reason, farming families in Bangladesh have gradually tried to move away from agriculture seeking other livelihoods. Sons of farmers often did not want to continue farming; instead, they pursued jobs or business opportunities. Even farmers themselves were reluctant to bring their children into the profession. This was partly due to agriculture's low social status and limited respect as a profession. However, with changing times, this perception is improving as agriculture becomes more technology-driven and more profitable than ever before. People in our aware society are beginning to recognize that agriculture is a pathway to prosperity.

It is true that Bangladesh is an agrarian country, where a significant portion of the population depends directly or indirectly on agriculture. Agriculture was once primarily a means to meet subsistence needs farmers grew crops mainly to feed their own families. But this picture has changed over the time. Today, agriculture is not just about feeding the stomach; it has become a profit-oriented, market-driven commercial activity. So, agriculture in Bangladesh now transforming from subsistence to commercial.

Subsistence farming is known as a family survival strategy. Subsistence farming was traditionally carried out by farmers to meet the food needs of themselves and their families. This type of farming typically involved small plots of land and minimal use of modern technology. Family labor was the main workforce, and the produce was usually reserved for household consumption rather than sale in the market. This ancient system still persists in many rural areas of Bangladesh.

On the other hand, commercial agriculture is market-driven and technology-intensive. Commercial agriculture focuses on maximizing profit by utilizing larger land areas and employing modern technology and machinery. In recent years, educated youth in Bangladesh have increasingly embraced commercial farming due to its higher profitability and social respect. Commercial agriculture involves not only crop production but also integrated management of pro-

cessing, packaging, marketing, and export.

Although the majority of farmers are still engaged in subsistence farming, commercial agriculture has expanded significantly over the past few decades. Vegetables, poultry, fish farming, floriculture, fruit cultivation, and even organic farming have come under this category, opening new horizons for the national economy. However, the transition is not without obstacles. Many subsistence farmers lack capital, technology, and knowledge to shift to commercial farming. Climate change, market access difficulties, and other barriers persist.

Nearly 10 million people in Bangladesh are underemployed or unemployed. According to Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, there are approximately 2.7 million educated unemployed, with an additional 400,000 to



500,000 young people joining this group annually. Yet, new job creation remains limited. While it is impossible to create jobs for all immediately, the government can offer vocational training to turn this large workforce towards productive employment.

Bangladesh is currently experiencing a demographic bonus its working-age population is at an all-time high, which may last 30-40 years. This is an ideal period to seek alternative, sustainable employment opportunities. Commercial agriculture has the potential to be a significant, sustainable platform for job creation.

Farming today is not just about traditional ploughing and manual labour. It is a science-based, commercial sector. A motivated, educated young farmer can learn modern agricultural techniques quickly and, with proper planning and dedication, earn 40,000 to 50,000 BDT per month—more sustainable and respectable than many low-paying jobs. Agricultural departments across all upazilas provide region-specific training and advice on profitable crops.

Global scientific advancements and technological adoption have revolutionized agriculture in Bangladesh. Seasonal farming is gradually giving way to year-round crop production,

ensuring fair prices for farmers. Exotic fruits like Thai guava, dragon fruit, avocado, kiwi, and rambutan are now grown successfully in different parts of the country, fostering a new class of young agricultural entrepreneurs. They leverage modern machinery, technology, marketing strategies, and digital tools to elevate farming to new heights.

Despite the hopeful signs, challenges remain. The number of agricultural entrepreneurs is still insufficient to meet national demand. Many young people have potential but lack direction, capital, training, and policy support to enter farming. Sustainable agricultural development in Bangladesh requires maintaining a balance between subsistence and commercial farming. Providing improved seeds, training, and small loans to subsistence farmers will help them advance towards commercial farming.

Awareness of environmentally friendly agricultural practices must also increase.

Agricultural scientists, researchers, extension workers, and policymakers play vital roles in this transformation. Most importantly, countless small and large agricultural entrepreneurs invest hard-earned capital and assume risks to implement new technologies. The government should support these entrepreneurs by ensuring access to training, finance, and market opportunities.

We are moving towards a promising and "golden era" of agriculture—where science-based, technology-driven, and innovative farming can bring Bangladesh's agriculture to international standards. Coordinated state and social initiatives are necessary to sustain this positive momentum and attract more youth into the sector. Ultimately, if agriculture can be developed not only as a food source but also as a profitable, respectable, and environmentally sustainable profession, the country's agricultural development will be assured.

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