

What Must Be Done to Evade Future Food Security Risks



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This year, heavy rainfall, flash floods from upstream hills, and repeated flooding have severely affected Bangladesh's major rice-producing regions. Vast areas of cropland in Chattogram, Cox's Bazar, Sylhet, Mymensingh, and the haor wetlands were submerged. Boro rice, Aush rice, Aman seedbeds, and summer vegetables suffered the greatest damage, putting national food security at risk. The situation has become serious enough that the government has decided to import rice from the international market and has also allowed private-sector imports.

According to the Ministry of Agriculture, continuous rainfall, hill runoff, and early flooding beginning on April 26 caused extensive damage to Boro rice and other crops in seven haor districts. The total financial loss is estimated at approximately Tk10.47 billion. About 49,073 hectares or 10.78 per cent of the total haor agricultural land—were damaged, reducing rice production by an estimated 213,000 tonnes. Nearly 236,000 farmers were directly affected by the disaster.

Before the country could recover from the shock to food security caused by flooding in the haor region, recent floods in Chattogram pushed agriculture into even greater danger. Submerged crops, washed-

away fish farms, and losses of livestock have created a deep crisis in the rural economy. Heavy rainfall and hill runoff during July caused widespread agricultural damage across Chattogram and other districts. Government estimates show that between July 6 and 13 alone, about 114,723 hectares of cropland were inundated, affecting approximately 526,874 marginal farmers.

Media estimates suggest that rice production may decline by around 600,000 tonnes. This is not merely a seasonal production shortfall; it could affect food inflation, farmers' incomes, rural employment, and national food security. Therefore, alongside emergency relief, Bangladesh must adopt short-, medium-, and long-term policy measures.

The first and immediate priority is rapid assessment of crop losses and targeted support for affected farmers. The Department of Agricultural Extension should quickly complete district-level damage assessments and prepare verified beneficiary lists so that incentives and assistance reach genuinely affected farmers. Immediate support for the upcoming Aman season is essential. Since a large share of Aman seedbeds has been damaged, short-duration and flood-tolerant rice seedlings should be distributed free of charge on an emergency basis. This would allow farmers to resume transplanting as soon as floodwaters recede. Field-level agricultural officers note that creating new Aman seedbeds at this late stage is practically impossible. Unless seedlings are transported from other districts, large areas of land may remain uncultivated. Many farmers financed their production through bank or NGO loans; after losing their crops, they have also lost their working capital. Their

financial recovery must be addressed urgently.

Food stocks, imports and crop insurance are equally important. Government and private rice imports must be completed swiftly and transparently to prevent artificial shortages and price manipulation, while Open Market Sales (OMS) should be expanded in flood-affected and low-income areas. At the same time,

(BADC) should play a central role in supplying certified seed.

Flood-damaged embankments, canals, and drainage systems must be repaired quickly. Without rapid rehabilitation, the same losses are likely to recur during the next rainy season. A coordinated repair plan involving the Bangladesh Water Development Board and the Local Government Engineering Department is essential.

BRRI and the Bangladesh Agricultural Research Institute. The declining share of agriculture in the national budget should also be reversed. At the same time, reducing dependence on rice through floating agriculture, raised-bed cultivation, vegetables and pulses can help farmers better withstand climate shocks and safeguard food security.

A stronger institutional linkage is needed between the Bangladesh Meteorological Department, the Water Development Board, and the DAE. Weather and flood forecasts should be directly connected to field-level advisory services so that farmers receive timely warnings and recommendations on harvesting, transplanting, or protecting their crops before floods arrive. Finally, Bangladesh should establish a robust strategic grain reserve policy that builds adequate stocks during normal years and allows rapid market intervention during disasters.

The possibility of losing around 600,000 tonnes of rice is not an isolated incident; it is a reflection of the growing reality of climate change. Emergency relief and imports may address the immediate shortage, but without sustained investment in agricultural research, climate-resilient infrastructure, drainage systems, and forecast-based preparedness, similar crises will continue to recur. Policymakers must therefore move beyond short-term gap-filling and commit to building a resilient agricultural and food security system capable of withstanding the climate risks of the future.

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the government should expedite the implementation of crop insurance to protect farmers from future climate-related losses.

Among the medium-term measures, the country should set a clear target for higher production in next Boro season to compensate for Aman losses. This requires ensuring access to high-yielding varieties, fertilizers, irrigation facilities, and quality seed. The Bangladesh Rice Research Institute (BRRI) and the Bangladesh Agricultural Development Corporation

Concurrently, stronger market monitoring is needed. During periods of production shortfall, artificial hoarding and excessive stockpiling must be prevented through effective enforcement of stock limits and market surveillance so that inflationary pressure on consumers remains under control.

In the long run, Bangladesh must pursue structural reforms to strengthen climate resilience. Greater investment is essential to develop flood-tolerant and short-duration crop varieties, with increased funding for the

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