

Constraints of smallholder farmers in Bangladesh: A qualitative assessment

Humnath Bhandari¹, Samarendu Mohanty¹ and Alamgir Chowdhury²

¹International Rice Research Institute and ²Socioconsult Limited Bangladesh

Introduction

More than 80% of Bangladeshi farmers are smallholders (less than 1 ha). They face several constraints to increase agricultural productivity and improve livelihoods. Information about transformations and constraints in agricultural production is pivotal to design suitable interventions with high impacts. This paper presents key transformations and constraints in agricultural production in Bangladesh.

Data and Methodology

We used qualitative data collected from sampled 12 villages located across 11 districts of Bangladesh under the Village Dynamics in South Asia (VDSA) Project. Data were collected using one focus group discussion each in the 12 villages in 2013. Data were analyzed descriptively and the responses were summarized for each theme.



Results

A. Farmers perceived major changes in agriculture in the past 10 years

Major changes in the past 10 years	% of sampled villages (multiple responses)
Adoption of improved rice varieties (HYV, stress-tolerant, and hybrids)	100
Increased cost of production	100
Increased farming of cash crops, fish, poultry and livestock	92
Higher use of fertilizers and insecticides	83
Increased irrigation and mechanization	75
Better access to formal and semi-formal sources of credit	75
Better knowledge on improved farming practices	67
Better transport, communication, and market access	58
Decreased cultivation of rice, jute and sugarcane	58
Higher prices of outputs and higher income from farming	50

B. Farmers perceived major changes in agriculture in the next 10 years

Expected major changes in the next 10 years	% of sampled villages (multiple responses)
Increased use of improved technologies	100
Higher prices of input and cost of production	100
Scarcity and higher cost of agricultural labor	100
Increased farming of cash crops, fish, and livestock	83
Increased mechanization	83
Increased problem of climate change (flood, drought and salinity)	75
More intensified and diversified cropping systems	67
Scarcity and higher cost of irrigation	67
Decreased <i>boro</i> rice due to scarcity and higher cost of irrigation	58
Improved transportation, communication, and market access	58

C. Farmers perceived major constraints to agriculture

Major constraints to agriculture	% of sampled villages (multiple responses)
Lack of good quality seeds and suitable improved technologies	100
Higher prices of inputs and cost of production	100
Low prices of outputs and low profit in agriculture	92
Scarcity and rising cost of agricultural labor	92
Require higher inputs, and fertilizer & pesticide are adulterated	83
Poor transport system and market access	75
Lack of financial capital and inadequate access to credit	67
Scarcity and rising cost of irrigation, and poor drainage	67
Problems due to climate change (flood, drought, and salinity)	67
Poor knowledge and information on improved technologies	58
Low mechanized crop establishment, crop care, and harvesting	50
Lack of or unreliable electricity for <i>boro</i> rice irrigation	42

Conclusions

Bangladesh's agriculture is rapidly transforming towards higher cropping intensity, crop diversification, and agricultural productivity. Yet, smallholder farmers face several constraints to achieve their full potential. Adequate funding on agricultural research and development is required to help farmers find solutions to these constraints.

The VDSA Project provides firsthand information about production constraints and needs of smallholder farmers, which is vital for research and development priority settings.