

# FRUIT PRODUCTION IN BANGLADESH - A UNIQUE CONTRIBUTION ON NUTRITIONAL FOOD SECURITY, HOUSEHOLD INCOME, POVERTY REDUCTION, WOMEN PARTICIPATION, BIODIVERSITY, SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT, ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AND SPECIALLY IN DEVELOPMENT OF IMMUNITY TO COMBAT COVID-19

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## ABSTRACT

Bangladesh is an agrarian country with almost 80% of the population living in rural areas and depending on agriculture. With the increase in population and decrease in cultivable land, there is an increasing demand in nutritionally rich high value fruit crops. Although Bangladesh is self-sufficient in grains, there are still about 40 million people suffering from malnutrition i.e. deficient in vitamins and minerals (hidden hunger). The fruit production scenario of Bangladesh in 2016-2017 was 83.31 lakh tons production in an area of 7.20 lakh hectares (8.57% of total land), while demand was about 129.48 lakh tons (HW, DAE, BBS 2017) resulting in a deficit of 46.17 lakh tons. Bangladesh produces 64% of the total demand for fruits. The rest of the 36% fruits are imported using huge foreign currency. Nevertheless, the fruit production scenario is rapidly changing with fruit growers coming forward in this sector to improve production of the most common fruits such as mango, jackfruit, litchi, blackberry, pineapple, banana, palm fruit, coconut, guava, Burmese grape, and watermelon. After meeting local demands, Bangladesh is now exporting some of its most popular fruits, mostly to countries that have large numbers of Bangladeshi expatriates. Some fruits are in a better position for export, attributed to their quality and production. Bangladesh is the seventh largest mango producer, and third producer for guava in the world. Sustainable Agro technology, GAP and GHP applied in fruits crops are now improving nutrition intake, household food security and household income. Moreover, fruit production also creates employment, reduces poverty, and protects the environment. About 20% women, especially in the rural areas are involved in fruit production. Incorporating modern fruit production technology in the 24 million homesteads enriches nutrition intake, provides all year and sustainable income. It has been reported that income from fruit production was five to six fold more than income from agronomical crops. Fruit crops also act as windbreak in rural villages/houses, and as shelter belt in coastal areas of Bangladesh. Evergreen horticultural plants sink abundance of CO<sub>2</sub> and releases significant amounts of oxygen, consequently resulting in cleaner air and environment.

Keywords: Nutritional food security, fruit production, poverty reduction, environment, income Generations, women participation, household food security, immunity development against COVID-19

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\*1 lakh = 100,000