



Fortnightly column

Village Dynamics Insights

Spotlight on agriculture in Bangladesh

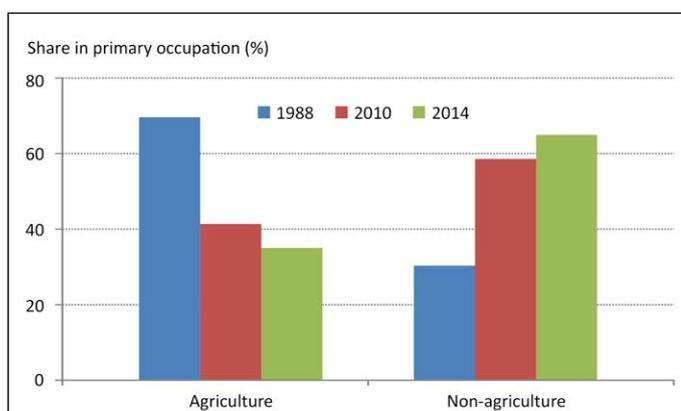
A strong trend of people moving out of agriculture, women playing a greater role, increasing trend in average age of farmers, declining landholding per capita, and increasing tenancy farming are different elements of the mosaic of agricultural transformation in Bangladesh.

Below are some insights gained from surveys of more than 500 households in 12 villages across 11 districts. A wide range of data collected since 1988 shows a range of trends.

Broad trends

The annual per capita income in these villages increased 2.4 times between 1988 and 2013 to about US\$ 450, with the share of agriculture in primary occupation going down by more than 50%. Overall poverty nearly halved to 30%, but the figures vary widely between villages.

These improvements were associated with increased employment in farm and non-farm sector, an expansion of irrigation, adoption of modern varieties, accumulation of agricultural and non-agricultural capital, access to agricultural credit, market access through better roads and infrastructure, education attainment and expansion of the rural non-farm economy. Migration within and outside the country also played an important role.



Decreasing trend of agriculture as a primary occupation.

Village views

When asked in 2013 what were some of their biggest challenges, the main issues identified by the farmers were: lack of good quality seeds and improved technologies (100%), higher prices of inputs and cost of production (100%), low prices of outputs and low profit in agriculture (92%), scarcity and cost of labor (92%), requirement of high inputs and adulteration of fertilizer and pesticides (82%) and poor transport system and market access (75%).

Special insights

Special purpose surveys have also examined gender dynamics of agricultural diversification, livelihood diversification, rice technology adoption and impact, and groundwater markets.



Photo: VDSA Bangladesh team

Listening to the voices of women farmers.

A recent survey on use of rice hybrids by 510 farmers provided information on adoption level, productivity and profitability, along with the advantages and constraints faced by the farmers with a view to articulating the technology need and policy intervention for sustainable intensification.

Crop diversification remains low in Bangladesh, with rice covering 76% of the cropped area. In the last 25 years the share of *Aus* (pre-wet season) rice declined from 27% to 9% of the area, with *Boro* (dry season) rice more than doubling from 19% to 42% due to the increase in irrigation. Nearly all of the *Aus* and *Boro* season rice and 70% of *Aman* (wet season) rice grown are high yielding varieties, leading to an increase in average rice yield from 2.4 t per ha to 4.15 t per ha.

Influence

VDSA data is being used by government and donors to plan and direct funding, for example in [Bangladesh's 7th Five-Year Plan](#), the major programs of the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) in Bangladesh and those of the [Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation](#).

"The data tells you how people move out of poverty into prosperity. This is very useful for donors who can pinpoint exactly where they want to intervene to get the maximum value for their investment," said Dr Samarendu Mohanty, Head of IRRI's Social Sciences Division.

In Bangladesh the VDSA project is overseen by [IRRI](#). The project undertakes surveys in villages at varied times, from weekly through to annually.

References

- [Dynamics of Rural Livelihoods and Poverty in Bangladesh](#)
- [Agricultural transformation in Bangladesh](#)
- [Agricultural labour dynamics in Bangladesh](#)
- [Constraints of smallholder farmers in Bangladesh](#)
- [Rural livelihood transformation in Bangladesh.](#)

Project:
Village Dynamics
in South Asia

This work is
now incorporated
as part of the



RESEARCH PROGRAM ON
Policies,
Institutions
and Markets

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Bill & Melinda
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