

Expert Consultation Workshop on Salmonella



A view of workshop on Salmonella spp.

To find out **Short** and **Long Term** treatments of exportable betel leaves contaminated by *Salmonella spp* and other harmful bacteria like *E.coli*, *Total coli form*, Hortex Foundation (HF) in associated with Bangladesh Fruits, Vegetables and Allied Products Exporters Association (BFVAPEA) organized an expert consultation workshop on “*Salmonella spp. and other major Pests of Exportable Betel leaf*” at HF Conference Room on 03 January 2012. HF invited the distinguished participants for the workshop from different organizations like BCSIR; Institute of Food Science and Technology (IFST); ICDDR’B; Department of Microbiology, University of Dhaka; Department of Botany, Rajshahi University; Department of Plant Pathology, Bangladesh Agricultural University, Mymensingh; Department of Soil Science, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman Agricultural University, Gazipur; Department of Plant Pathology, Sher-e-Bangla Agricultural University, Dhaka; Quarantine Department of Plant Protection Wing, DAE etc. Dr. S. M. Monowar Hossain, Managing Director of Hortex Foundation presided over the workshop.

After a threadbare discussion in the workshop, the experts came to the conclusions that the betel leaves have every possibilities to be contaminated by harmful bacteria like *Salmonella spp.* during production, post-harvest management and marketing period. The workshop identified the major sources of contamination are: soil, water, dust, organic & inorganic fertilizers, excrements of human being, birds and animals, packaging materials, handling activities during grading, sorting, cleaning, packaging and transportation for not properly maintaining sanitary and phytosanitary measures.

The experts suggested taking appropriate measures for decontamination of *salmonella spp.* and other harmful bacteria especially during post-harvest handling practices, pre-shipment activities for local and export marketing. Finally, the experts suggested to form a specialized committee to find out the probable solutions in terms of **Short Term** (6 months - 12 months) and **Long Term** (one year and above) basis. Accordingly, they formulated a 9 (nine) members committee and requested them to submit a draft report with recommendations within 30 days. The committee members made a draft report with some recommendations and guidelines.

Betel leaf is one of the important cash crops of Bangladesh. After meeting the national demands, the country earned a good amount of foreign exchange to the tune of US\$ 42.98 million equivalent of Tk. 352 Crores during the FY2010-2011 through exporting of betel leaves (*Source: Flower & foliage code, EPB*). It is essential to sustain export of betel leaves in order to uphold the economic growth of the country as well as export market demand of the produce and its reputation. Failure to ensure export of *Salmonella spp.* and other harmful bacteria free betel leaves will affect entire export of fresh fruits and vegetables. So, the committee made recommendations to take following interventions immediately:

- It is necessary to setup a central pack-house under collaboration of public and private sectors for the purpose of processing of betel leaves and other exportable horticultural crops centrally as quick as possible by one stop service.
- Supervise of processing activities in the central pack-house are to be continued by an organization having expertise in the related field.
- Necessary Fund is to be provided either by GOB/Donors or by private sectors or jointly to meet up the costs of research, training, management, extension/diversification of export market and other relevant areas of activities.
- A pilot sub-sector study can be conducted under establishment of central pack-house where all post-harvest handling i.e. grading, sorting, cleaning, treating, packaging, cool-chain management activities can be performed by trained personnel by following HACCP guidelines, different regulatory measures and treatment option for betel leaves and other exportable horticultural crops.