

POLITICS & POLICIES

Country to formulate BanglaGAP policy to boost agri goods' export

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The country is going to formulate 'the Bangla Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) Policy' aiming to enter the foreign mainstream export market with a view to boosting shipment of agricultural produce.

GAP is a globally accepted accreditation criterion which certifies safe and healthy farm food and non-food produce of a country.

It is applied through sustainable agricultural methods, such as integrated pest management, integrated fertiliser management and conservation of agriculture.

Under 'the Bangla GAP Policy', an accreditation board will also be formed for branding Bangladeshi agro-products globally, officials said.

Assistant General Manager (Supply and Value Chain, Marketing) of the country's Horticulture Export Development Foundation (Hortex Foundation) Mitul K Saha told the FE that the Bangla GAP would be formulated by keeping harmony with the global standard.

In this connection, a concept by Hortex Foundation was sent to the agriculture ministry in July 2010 for approval.

A four-member national committee for GAP, headed by Member-Director of Bangladesh Agricultural Research Council (BARC) Khaliquzzaman Akanda, was formed in May this year to formulate the policy, Mitul said.

Member of the national committee and also Assistant General Manager of Hortex Foundation (GAP, Traceability, Process and Packaging) Md Rafiqul Islam told the FE that the draft of the Agricultural Policy 2011 had also addressed the GAP.

Mr Islam said Bangladesh export fruits and vegetables mainly to the ethnic markets of EU and Middle-Eastern countries.

The country now exports nearly 50,000 tonnes of vegetables and fruits (excluding potato) to the importing nations.

This can be increased manifold by appropriating GAP, he said.

"A local accreditation in the light of GAP can enable us to enter the mainstream market of the importing nations," he said adding, "in that case, our export will increase."

The accreditation board, whose name has not been fixed yet, will also officially be recognised by the well-known international accreditation agencies, he added.

When contacted, convener of the committee for formulating GAP guideline Khaliquzzaman Akanda told the FE that agriculture had been changing rapidly following globalisation of world trade, food crisis, pollution of water, appearance of pesticide resistance, soil erosion, etc.

When asked, Akanda said the policy will appropriate an integrated supply and value chain for timely supply management of agricultural produce including fruits and vegetables.

This supply and value chain will benefit not only the businesses and consumers but also the farmers, he said.

"To keep harmony with the global practices, we are working to formulate 'the Bangla GAP guideline'," Dr Akanda informed the FE.

He said it will also incorporate individual protocol of a crop which will help increase export and also benefit the local consumers for getting safer food.

Bangladesh Agro-based Producers and Merchants' Association (BAPMA) president Mohd Ruhul Amin said, "our competitor countries like India, Thailand and Kenya have already incorporated GAP, so we should not be late."

This policy will open a horizon for the exporters to explore many non-traditional farm produce of the country in the global market, he added.

The country's Export Promotion Bureau (EPB) data showed that agricultural products export was nearly US \$ 334 million in the FY'11 while the export surpassed \$ 357 million in July-May period of the just ended FY'12.