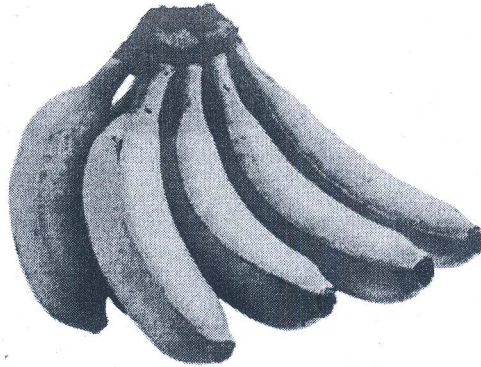


TRADE & MARKET

Bangladesh is going to add green banana to its limited export baskets as the nation moves to ship the agro-product rich in nutrition value, officials said.

The country exports around 50 agricultural products to the European Union (EU), Middle-East and North-American countries, but banana is yet to make foray due to stringent sanitary regulations.



"We're set to emerge as a green banana-exporting nation," assistant general manager of Horticulture Export Development Foundation (Hortex Foundation) Mitul K Saha said.

Talking to the FE, Mr Saha said banana exports are a "critical process" as many requirements are to be met as per demands of the importing countries.

He said on sanitary and phytosanitary requirement of the buyers, Hortex Foundation in collaboration with Bangladesh Export Promotion Bureau (EPB) and Bangladesh Agricultural Research Institute (BARI) has recently conducted a study on 'Shelf Life of Green Banana.'

Phytosanitary requirement means the inspection intended to prevent the spread and the introduction across national boundaries of pests of plants and plant products.

The study result was outstanding in term of fulfilling the requirements, Mr Saha said.

He said the cold storage test of banana was conducted by the post harvest division of the BARI for promoting banana export in the international market. The tests were carried out over Bangladeshi banana variety Meher Sagar, he said.

According to the BARI post-harvest division, under the study fresh uniform-sized green matured bananas were stored in CFB carton and kept in constant temperature.

After nine treatments, the bananas were found better even after 22 days of storage, considering their colour, firmness and overall acceptability, the study showed.

When contacted, Vice-chairman of the state-run EPB Subhashish Bose said that the most challenging aspect of banana export is to maintain the time---from growers' level to the foreign consumers' level---the quality should be ensured during the period.

He expressed optimism that the tests conducted by Bangladeshi research organisations will enable us to maintain the quality and freshness at least for a month which will be perfect for shipment.

Bose said our banana can easily attract the foreign buyers following its test and quality.

He said the country, after a long time, started export citrus fruits like Jara Lemon in 2008 after meeting all requirements by the buyers.

The EPB official also pointed out that appropriating the Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) policy, which is likely to be adapted soon, it would be easier to export fruits like pineapple, banana and other non-tradition fruits to the mainstream market of the importing nations instead of ethnic market, he added.

According to the Department of Agriculture Extension (DAE), the country produced nearly 1.0 million tonnes of banana on 0.133 hectares of lands annually.

Bangladesh agricultural products export surpassed US \$ 357 million in July-May period of the just ended FY'12, EPB data said.

After rice, wheat, and corn, banana is the fourth most widely consumed food by humans.

Nearly 15 million tonnes of banana worth US \$ 14.5 billion is exported in the world market annually.

Ecuador, Philippines, Costa Rica, Colombia, Guatemala, Honduras, Panama, Cameroon, Brazil and Ivory Coast are the top ten banana exporting nations in the world while India is the biggest producer.