

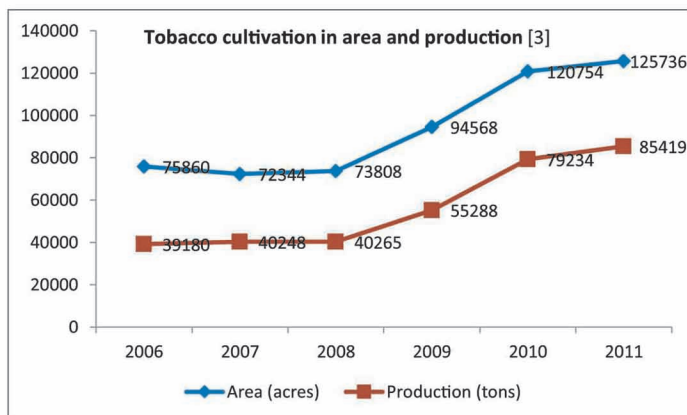
BANGLADESH

Tobacco Farming: A threat to food security, environment and human health

The WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (WHO FCTC) recognizes the need to promote economically viable alternatives to tobacco production as a way to prevent possible adverse social and economic impacts on populations whose livelihoods depend on tobacco production. Moreover, Parties agreed to have due regard to the protection of the environment and the health of persons in respect of tobacco cultivation and manufacture.

Article 17 regards the provision of support for economically viable alternative activities and Article 18 the protection of the environment in respect of tobacco cultivation and manufacture and the health of persons [1].

Tobacco, mostly Flue Cured Virginia (FCV) and Barley variety, is a company sponsored crop grown since the last five decades. According to official data for 2016, tobacco is grown in 46,472 hectares of land, producing 87,628 tons. Bangladesh ranks 14th for area under tobacco, 12th for production in quantity, and has a share of 1.3% of global tobacco production [2].



Tobacco cultivation is highly labour intensive

- Tobacco is highly labour intensive: 415 person-days in tobacco vs 231 person days in food crop.
- Labour cost: 21% higher in tobacco than food crop.
- Tobacco cultivation is labour intensive not only in terms of numbers, but in terms of intensity of work.
- Tobacco workers lose work during the non-tobacco season.
- Tobacco workers suffer from health hazards due to hard work, exposure to agro-chemicals and nicotine.

Bangladesh became a Party to the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control on February 27, 2005. The Smoking and Tobacco Products Usage (Control) Act, 2005, as amended by the Smoking and Tobacco Products Usage (Control) (Amendment) Act, 2013, is the principal law governing tobacco control in Bangladesh. The Smoking and Tobacco Products Usage (Control) Rules, 2015 are the implementing rules of the Act and provide further details regarding many provisions of the law. The law provides the scope to frame the policy to discourage tobacco production and consumption. The government wants to make Bangladesh a tobacco-free nation by 2040.

Key Issues [4 & 5]

Tobacco farming is an unregulated, a company sponsored initiative trapping the farmers with credit and input bondage.

Tobacco farming is causing food insecurity, taking away fertile land for food production during the peak winter vegetable, lentil, spices and rice growing season (October to April)

Tobacco farming is causing environmental destruction, depleting soil and water, deforestation and loss of biodiversity

Excessive use of agro-chemicals including chemical fertilizers and pesticides is causing soil depletion as well as impacting on health of the farmers and workers

Use of unpaid (family) or low paid women and child labour in post-harvest curing of leaves

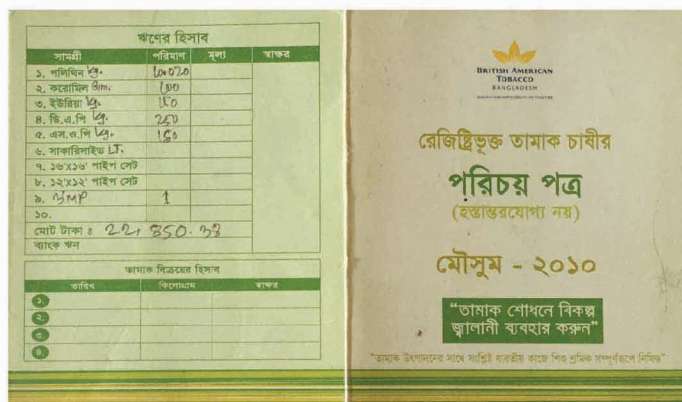
- Cost of family labour (if paid) is one-third of the labour cost.
- Women with infants are exposed to tobacco fumes during curing and sorting of the cured leaves.
- Children have to drop-out from school during tobacco curing period.

Nicotine exposure at different stages of tobacco growing is a health concern for farmers and workers.



Problems of small scale farmers –the Company card

- Tobacco production is vertically integrated through contractual arrangements with farmers.
- Company Card issued by BAT and other national Tobacco companies provides growers with access to credit for inputs (seeds, fertilizers, pesticides), fixation of price, buy cured leaves, specifies the quota amount of cured leaves and a delivery date – subject to action by the company if not met.
- Companies provide contract growers with loans they can use to prepare land or lease.
- This system is similar to “Dadon” in Bangla – an illegal lending practice
- Company support with inputs and marketing of the leaves – leads to indebtedness in cyclical order
- Companies use pricing promises to entice farmers into committing their land to a new season.
- Manipulation of pricing system in the use of sub-categories of tobacco grades applied during the time of purchase
- Sub-grades are created for each of the 8 grades in the contracting system.
- Tobacco companies use their sole authority to modify the contract unilaterally.



British American Tobacco Company Card

Bangladesh government initiatives

Tobacco Cultivation Control Policy, 2017

The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare drafted the Tobacco Cultivation Control Policy 2017 to discourage tobacco cultivation as mandated by the Smoking and Tobacco Products Usage (Control) (Amendment) Act, 2013 in compliance with Article 17 and 18 of the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC). The policy with multi-sectoral involvement is awaiting Ministerial approval.

As an immediate goal, the policy through various measures, the tobacco cultivation area will be brought down by half between

References:

1. Articles 17 and 18 of the FCTC: <http://www.who.int/fctc/implementation/resources/article-17-and-18/en/>
2. FAOSTAT 2018: Production Data. Combined online <http://www.factfish.com/statistic-country/bangladesh/tobacco,+production+quantity>
3. Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS), 2012, Ministry of Planning, Government of People's Republic of Bangladesh
4. Akhter, Farida, Buckles, Daniel and Rafiqul Haque Tito; "Breaking the Dependency on Tobacco Production: transition Strategies for Bangladesh". In N. L. Edited by Wardie Leppan, Tobacco control and Tobacco Farming: Separating Myth from Reality (pp. 141-187). London: Anthem Press for IDRC, 2014
5. Akhter, Farida, F. R. Haque Tito, Md. Begum, Nargis and M. Islam Prince. Tamaker Sringkhol theke Mukti (Freedom from Tobacco Chain). Dhaka: Narigrantha Prabartana, 2012.
6. Policy drafted to discourage tobacco farming, The Daily Star, 9 July, 2017 <https://www.thedailystar.net/business/policy-drafted-discourage-tobacco-farming-1430332>
7. Bangladesh Gazette Notification, November 8, 2017 "Health Development Surcharge Management Policy, 2017", Government of Peoples Republic of Bangladesh

2017 and 2026. Production of other crops will be increased on the same land. The National Tobacco Control Cell under the health ministry will coordinate actions among ministries to implement the policy [6].

The major emphasis of the draft policy is to provide farmers with easy loans and special incentives for fertilizer, seeds and other farm inputs and equipment to help them switch from tobacco cultivation to other crops. Farmers will be extended support to market their food crops so they can get fair prices for their produce. Alternative non-farm livelihood opportunities will also be created through multi-stakeholder involvement in the implementation of the policy.

The policy restricts companies to provide tobacco growers with subsidies, loans or other supports.

The draft policy stresses restriction on plantation and processing of tobacco products within 500 yards of homesteads, and its cultivation within 150 yards of the slopes of rivers, canals and lakes.

The use of wood to process tobacco will be restricted to prevent environmental degradation. Use of child labour is strictly banned under the policy.

Government's own resource generation

The government of People's Republic of Bangladesh imposed a surcharge of 1% on the income from imported and locally produced cigarette, bidi, zarda, gul and other tobacco items in the budget [7]. Accordingly BDT 3 billion per year is being deposited into the health ministry. The "Health Development Surcharge Management Policy-2017" is aimed at controlling the use of tobacco and creating mass awareness against the adverse impacts of tobacco on human health. The fund is used for various purposes of the health sector, particularly in tobacco control and preventing non-communicable diseases. The fund would be used in 14 specific sectors to help ensure long- term management in the health sector, especially to create awareness among common people against tobacco use, prevent farmers from cultivating tobacco and create alternative employment opportunities for them.

Recommendations

1. Farmers willing to shift out of tobacco must get support of inputs and marketing from the government as well as from development partners for growing alternative food crops.
2. Tobacco companies need to be regulated against trapping farmers with inputs, credit and marketing support.
3. Measures need to be taken for protection of environment and against deforestation.
4. Use of Child labour must be banned.
5. Health of tobacco farmers and workers must be protected.
6. Women in tobacco farming families be supported with non-farm livelihood.