National Agriculture Policy

Goals

Goals, objectives or targets related to nutrition:

The National Agriculture Policy broadly aims at creating an enabling environment for sustainable growth of agriculture for reducing poverty and ensuring food security through increased crop production and employment opportunity as envisaged in National Strategy for Accelerated Poverty Reduction (NSAPR), Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and SAARC Development Goals (SDGs). Specific Objectives: The specific objectives are to:

i) developing and harnessing improved technologies through research and training;

ii) increasing productivity and generating income and employment by transferring appropriate technologies and managing inputs;

iii) promoting competitiveness through commercialization of agriculture; and

iv) establishing a self-reliant and sustainable agriculture adaptive to climate change and responsive to farmers' needs.

Strategies

Strategies and activities related to nutrition:

Research and Development

A well-coordinated research plan is essential for the rapid development of crop sector. It needs paradigm shift in agriculture from a supply-driven to a demand-driven approach in agriculture. This will need a change in focus from production level to production efficiency, productivity and profitability. Besides, equity, employment, environmental sustainability, nutrition, food quality, trade etc. have new areas of concern even as efforts to maintain food security to continue. This demands effective introspection, reprioritization and consolidation of R&D activities besides overall accountability.

Agricultural Extension

Agricultural extension is the key driving force for the growth and development of agriculture in Bangladesh. To increase farm productivity and farmers' income access to new technology is required. The role of extension is to deliver services and to speed up farmers' access to and adoption of new technology. The Government is mandated to providing efficient and effective need based extension services to farmers to enable them to optimize their use of resource to augment self-sufficiency in food production and to improve their nutritional status. For this, there is an increasing need for strengthening agricultural extension services to ensure production system on a sustainable basis. Appropriate institutional arrangement needs to be established so that research and extension can interact effectively with each other and with farmers to address the critical needs of the production practices at the farm level.
Seeds and Planting Materials
At present, only a small portion of the required quality seeds for different crops is made available mostly by the public sector. Few seed companies and NGOs have started supplying quality seed primarily hybrids of rice, maize and vegetables. A portion of the required quality seed is produced, preserved and used under private management especially at the farmers' level.

Fertilizer
Fertilizer is one of the critical inputs required for increasing crop production. The expansion of modern agricultural practices together with intensified cultivation has led to an increasing demand for fertilizers. It is, therefore, necessary to ensure timely supply of fertilizers to meet the increasing demand. Imbalanced use of chemical fertilizers is causing land degradation excessive mining of plant nutrients resulting in the decline of soil fertility on the one hand and reduction in the potential yield on the other. It is, therefore, important to adopt pragmatic measure so as to encourage farmers in using balanced fertilizers to maintain soil fertility.

Irrigation
Irrigation is considered as one of the most essential inputs for increasing crop production. Presently about 90-95 percent of the total irrigated area is covered by minor irrigation. Country's food production largely depends upon minor irrigation and shallow tube well (STW) now being used in the country. Owing to shrinkage of water resources a significant portion of area is not getting water during lean period. Moreover, river linking project of the upper riparian country is likely to aggravate the situation. A well-planned irrigation management system is, therefore, essential for gradual increase of cropping intensity as well as yield. As such, national agriculture policy places special emphasis on the judicious use of water resources.

Mechanization in Agriculture
Mechanization is an important tool for profitable and competitive agriculture. The need for mechanization is increasing fast with the decrease of draft power. Without mechanization it will not be possible to maintain multiple cropping patterns, which need quick land preparation, planting, weeding, harvesting processing etc. Significant increase in use of agri-machinery primarily in tilling, seeding, weeding and threshing has been achieved. This trend needs to be extended further so that efficiency of production can be achieved with increased production and reduced cost. Mechanization should include post harvest activities including processing and preservation.

Agricultural Marketing
The agricultural marketing system provides the bridging link between farm produces and the consumers of food and agricultural products. As agricultural products need to be marketed, there is a need for building a strong market infrastructure to bring efficiency in marketing services. Development of efficient agricultural marketing system will, therefore, help farmers enhance their bargaining power and enable them to fetch better prices for their produces.

Women in Agriculture
Women represent nearly half of the country's human resources. For this, the government believes that more women comprising officials and farmers should enter the agricultural workforce. As women have potentials to contribute to agricultural growth, it is obligatory on the part of the Government to meaningfully involve them in agriculture-related income-generating activities and to develop their human resources.

Human Resource Development
As a predominantly agricultural country, Bangladesh needs to have a vast reservoir of educated, trained and skilled agri-workforce to bridge the gap between the production capacity of farmers and the consumption requirement of citizens and to ensure their food security. Effective human resource development (HRD) should be based on appropriate human resource, planning and career development. This can be achieved through developing appropriate training and education packages including in-service training and through performance based reward system. Major challenge is to develop an efficient workforce capable enough to cope with the emerging issues of
technology and to acquire skills of development entrepreneurship. The government plans to introduce innovative approaches to upgrade the skill of farmers and technological empowerment of women engaged in agriculture. The government therefore places high priority on training as a tool for developing human resources in the field of agriculture.

Reference:
WHO Global Nutrition Policy Review 2009-2010