

Tomato farming elevates Rajshahi farmers living, livelihood conditions

December 12, 2023

Online Desk: Tomato farming has been playing a vital role in improving the living and livelihood conditions of farmers along with their economic enhancement in Rajshahi region, including its vast Barind tract.

A lot of farmers have already changed their fortunes through tomato cultivation in the region as they earn between Taka 40,000 to Taka 50,000 by cultivating the popular cooking items on each bigha of land at a season.

Hundreds of youth in Godagari Upazila, one of the major tomato-producing hubs in the country, have become self-reliant by cultivating tomato, a cash vegetable.

Traders from different parts of the country, including Dhaka, Chattogram and Sylhet, have already started coming here to buy the vegetables from the farmers this winter.

According to the local agricultural officer, Godagari may witness a Tk 110-Crore sale of tomatoes this chilly season. A tomato trader from Chapainawabganj, Samirul, 48, says he made a profit of Tk 100,000 in just two months last year.

As the prices of tomatoes are good this year, he says, he expects to earn more. More than 200 traders from various parts of the country have already arrived here to collect the vegetables this winter, the trader said.

Abdur Rahman, 52, a tomato farmer of Matikata village, said one has to spend Tk 25,000 for cultivating tomatoes on a bigha of land. He expresses satisfaction with the prices of tomatoes at present.

Abdur Rouf, a farmer of Dewpara village under Godagari Upazila, said the early varieties of tomato are available in local markets and the price is very high. He mentioned that one kilogram of tomato is being sold at Taka 80 in the local market.

The wholesale price of a maund of tomato is now about Taka 2,500 to Taka 3,000, but its price will come down at the end of this season, tomato traders said. Ziarul Islam, a farmer of Ishwaripur village, said he has cultivated two hybrid varieties of tomatoes on one and half bigha of land spending Tk 1 lakh. In the last two weeks, he sold tomatoes worth Tk 30,000 and wholesalers as well as retailers are buying the tomatoes from his land at Tk 60-65 per kilogram.

“Platform-cultivated tomatoes have a demand here as they mature on plants and there is no need of using any chemical for ripening,” he said. Jahedul Islam, another farmer of Bidirpur village, said many farmers have already changed their fortunes through tomato cultivation in the region.

They can earn between Tk25,000 to Tk35,000 by cultivating tomatoes on each bigha of land in a season.

Shamsul Wadud, additional director of the Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE), Rajshahi, said tomato farming is gaining popularity in the region, particularly in the vast tract of Barind area, since its cultivation is profitable here.

Cultivation of the cash crop has increased by five to six times during the last 15 to 20 years due to the introduction of high-yielding and hybrid varieties of tomatoes and modern technology. In the current season, the cash crop has brought smiles on the faces of the farmers as they are getting expected yield and market price since the very beginning of the harvesting period.

The tomatoes produced without chemicals are being sent to different districts including the capital Dhaka after meeting the local demands. Shamsul Wadud said tomato, which is now considered as the second cash crop of the region, plays an important role in the economy.

More than one lakh families in the region are now getting direct financial benefit from either cultivating tomato or its trading, he said.

Dr Shakhawat Hossain, senior scientific officer of Bangladesh Agriculture Research Institute (BARI), said the soil and climate condition of the entire region, including Rajshahi, Natore, Naogaon and Chapainawabganj, are very suitable for tomato cultivation.

“So, it is now widely cultivated on the dry soil of the Barind area.”

Dr Hossain said BARI developed 10 high-yielding and quality varieties of tomatoes and it has been implementing special programmes to promote those among the growers through arranging farmers’ training and demonstration plots in different areas. The rates of production of the newly developed varieties are comparatively high and profitable than that of the domestic varieties, he said.

Besides, different public and private commercial banks, especially Rajshahi Krishi Unnayan Bank (Rakub), are giving credit to farmers to encourage them to cultivate tomatoes.

President of Rajshahi Chamber of Commerce and Industries Masudur Rahman said it is urgent to establish tomato processing plants to store the cash crop aiming to save tomato growers from financial loss.