

## Bangladesh recognized for halving hunger before MDG timeline

**16 June 2013, Rome** - Bangladesh is one of the 38 countries formally recognized by FAO Director-General José Graziano da Silva for reducing hunger by half well ahead of the target year 2015.

During a high-level ceremony attended by several heads of state, Bangladesh, along with the other recipient countries, received a diploma for early achievement of this fundamental target — to halve the proportion of hungry people by 2015 — set by Millennium Development Goal 1 (MDG1).



*The recognition ceremony at FAO Headquarters, 16 June 2013*

Recognition was based on hunger reductions achieved between 1990-92 and 2010-2012. The MDG 1 target was established at the UN General Assembly in 2000.

The Director-General pointed out that there were 928 days until the 2015 MDG deadline, but he urged countries to go beyond that and aim for the complete elimination of hunger.

"We are the first generation that can end hunger, which has plagued humanity since the birth of civilization. Let's seize this opportunity," he said.

This is an appreciation of Bangladesh's strong commitment to agricultural development, and follows FAO's highest Ceres Medal awarded to the Hon'ble Prime Minister in 1999 for her outstanding leadership in the progress towards attaining food security in Bangladesh.

Earlier in a press release issued from Rome on June 12, FAO declared that 38 countries have met internationally-established targets in the fight against hunger, achieving successes ahead of the deadline set for 2015. "These countries are leading the way to a better future. They are proof that with strong political will, coordination and cooperation, it is possible to achieve rapid and lasting reductions in hunger," said the FAO Director-General.

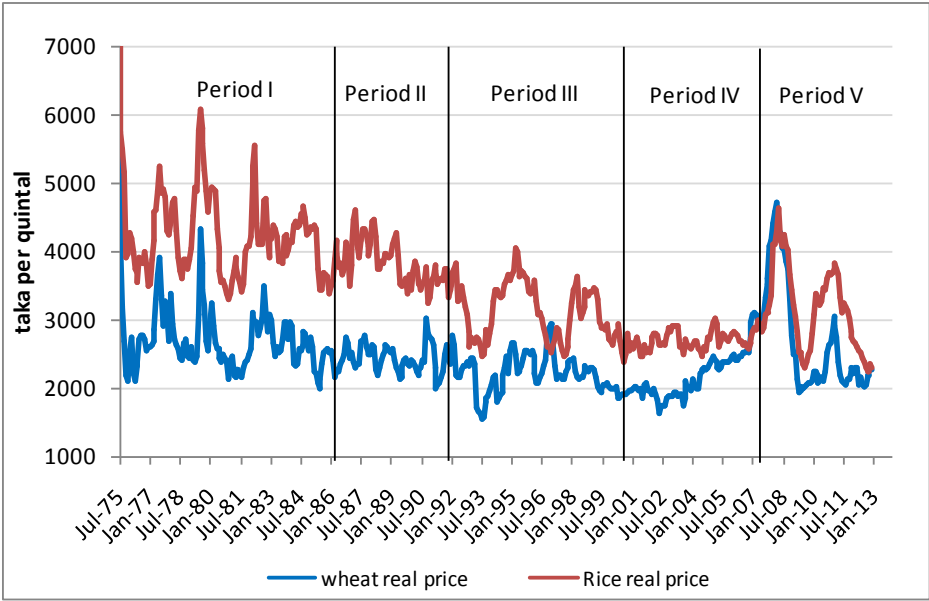
To hail this achievement, Director-General of the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) Jose Graziano da Silva invited Hon'ble Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina to receive a "Diploma Award". Hon'ble Minister for Food Dr. Mohammad Abdur Razzaque, MP received the award on behalf of the Hon'ble Prime Minister. "In the invitation, FAO said it would bestow us with the honour as recognition to Bangladesh's outstanding achievement in fighting hunger," the food minister commented to the Press before going to Rome.

The ceremony took place during the week-long meeting of FAO's highest governing body, the Conference. From South Asia, the Maldives is the only other country that will share the honour alongside Bangladesh for achieving MDG-1 ahead of schedule.

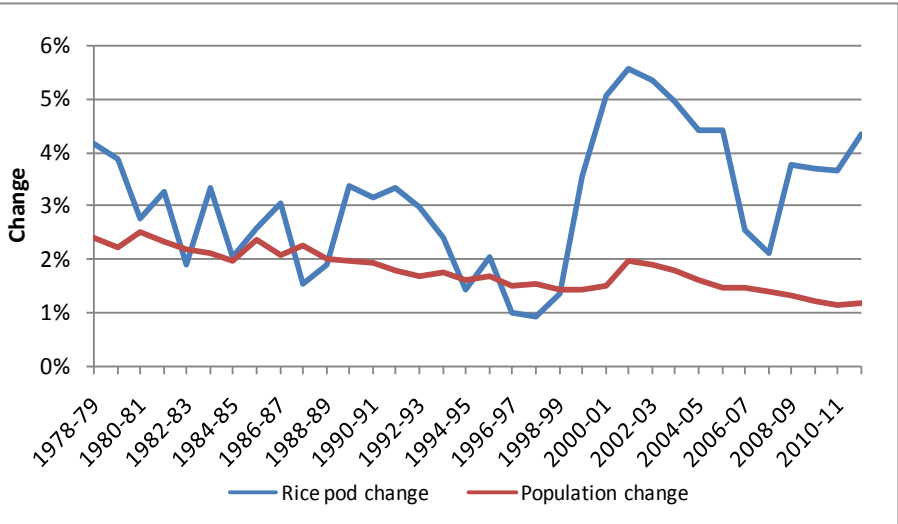
Poverty alleviation is the central component of the inclusive growth strategy advocated by the Perspective Plan (Planning Commission, 2010), as well as of food security agenda of Bangladesh. The National Food Policy (MoFDM, 2006) identified 26 specific Points of Action (MoFDM, 2008) focusing on food supply, food access and food utilization, especially for women and children. Demonstrating the GoB's focus to food security, the NFP and its Plan of Action are supported by the Country Investment Plan (CIP). CIP as the investment arm of NFP is responsible for securing and allocating the budget for the implementation of it (MoFDM, 2011).

The progress in poverty reduction was measured between 1990-92 and 2010-2012, against benchmarks established by the international community at the UN General Assembly in 2000. The population below the poverty line dropped from over 48.9% in 2000 to 31.50 percent in 2010. FAO declared on 12<sup>th</sup> June that Bangladesh succeeded in halving hunger; in other words, the population below the poverty head count rate has further dropped to around 29 percent (estimated annual rate of poverty reduction is 1.7%).

Bangladesh has also made commendable progress on food security. The Poverty Assessment Report (World Bank, 2013) shows that 38.4% of the population was moderately calorie deficient in 2010, down from 40.4% in 2005. The percentage of people suffering from severe calorie deficiency declined relatively faster from 19.5% in 2005 to 16.1% in 2010.



Rice production especially trebled since 1971; and real rice price is the lowest since the seventies. With the population growth rate approaching 1% per year, per capita consumption declining and loss of agricultural land being half percent annually, an annual increase in rice productivity of 2% or more



could allow releasing of land and other resources as required for diversification (NFP PoA and CIP Monitoring Report, 2013, forthcoming).

This recognition from FAO could have big boost in these and other relevant development trends, and support comprehensive food security as well as economic growth.