

Address of ICN2
By Ms. Matia Chowdhury,
Honorable Minister for Agriculture, Government of People's Republic of Bangladesh.

His Excellency the Chairperson, Director General FAO, WHO, Head of the States and Governments, Ministers, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen, Good Afternoon:

I am indeed very happy to attend the Second International Conference on Nutrition (ICN2) in this wonderful gathering. On behalf of our Honorable Prime Minister, the people of Bangladesh, Ministry of Agriculture and Health I would like to convey my sincere thanks to the organizers of this most timely conference.

Mr. Chairperson

Bangladesh has made steady progress in addressing malnutrition. We all know that food is of highest priority among all the daily necessities:

- Bangladesh has significantly reduced its poverty level from 40 % in 1990 to 25 % in 2014.
- Bangladesh achieved significant progress in rice production from 10 million metric tons in 70s to 34 million metric tons till 2012 thereby achieving near self-sufficiency in normal production. As a result, the calorie intake per capita (2430 kcal/day) also increased substantially due to increased rice production.
- Child mortality rates decreased significantly from 2004 (51%) to 2011 (41%) have due to the government initiatives to provide health support, awareness building, accessibility to improved food consumption;

Previously Bangladeshi children used to suffer from high rates of micronutrient deficiencies, vitamin A, iron, iodine and zinc deficiency in particular.

Bangladesh made significant progress in reducing vitamin A deficiency (VAD) among preschool children over the past 15 years; however, consumption of vitamin A rich foods is still low. This success has largely been due to the vitamin A supplementation programme of the government, which increased in coverage from 41 per cent in 1993 to over 85 per cent in the second half of the decade through distribution of vitamin A capsules.

A positive change in micronutrient malnutrition in the country is the reduction of goiter prevalence among children and women through the Universal Salt Iodization (USI) programme. Pulse and Oil consumption has also been increased. The stunting rate has been decreased and average life expectancy has been increased.

Mr. Chairperson

Bangladesh has very rich diversity of fruits and vegetables to meet the nutritional demand. More than 100 vegetables, 70 fruits and 60 spices are produced. However, Bangladesh Agriculture Research Institute (BARI) has developed a number of nutrient rich vegetables and fruit /crops which is helping to improve nutrition - micronutrient deficiencies in particular. Among them:-

- β (beta) carotene rich sweet potato and tomato;
- late variety mango and pumpkin (Vitamin A);
- brinjal with high antioxidant;
- coloured guava with high vitamin-A/ β (beta) carotene;
- okra with high fibre;
- short duration mineral enriched chillies;
- high yielding variety with high oil content mustard and
- QPM (quality protein maize) are the prominent.

Liberal seed policy facilitated introduction of exotic varieties/hybrids.

- **Production of fruits has increased to 7.96 million metric tons in 2010-2011 from 1.41 million metric tons in 1994-95.**
- **Vegetables production also significantly increased from 1.21 million metric tons to 13.22 million metric tons in 2012-2013. Vegetables are available now round the year..**
- **Although the consumption of fruits and vegetables increased significantly from 169 grams in 2000 to 211 grams in 2010.**

Bangladesh pioneered in accepting advanced technologies for agriculture -

- **The country's first bio-fortified rice variety (enriched with zinc) namely BRRI dhan-62, BRRI dhan 64 have been released. Rice has a zinc content of 20 to 22 mg/kg and this is capable to fighting diarrhea and pneumonia-induced childhood deaths and stunting.**
- **International Potato Centre adapted and developed orange fleshed sweet potato (OFSP) locally called "Komola Sundury.", Vines are easy to preserve for planting the next season. Both leaves and roots provide vitamin A– Good for the eyes– Helps the body to fight diseases.**
- **Fortified yogurts are available in the market. Fortification of soybean oil in particular with Vitamin A has been ongoing since 2010. A maximum and minimum level of vitamin A fortification is between 0.015 and 0.030 mg vitamin- A per gram edible oil respectively i.e. from 15 - 30ppm. Presently, almost 60% of marketed edible oils are fortified with vitamin A.**
- **Other food items like atta (wheat flour), biscuits under consideration for fortification.**

Bangladesh for the first time released Bt-brinjal for commercial cultivation. The four Bt brinjal varieties namely BARI Bt Begun - 1, 2, 3 & 4 developed against fruit and shoot borer by Bangladesh Agricultural Research Institute (BARI) for commercial cultivation.

The government's decision positively impacts thousands of consumers who depend on eggplant as an important source of vitamins and minerals in their daily diet.

Bt brinjal is expected to benefit smallholder farmers who will experience increased yields and consumers who will have more and better quality eggplant to eat. Farmers, consumers and the environment will benefit from reduced exposure to pesticide which causes health hazards.

Mr. Chairperson

The present government of Bangladesh has already formulated a number of relevant policies including-

- National Agriculture Policy 2013; National Nutrition Policy 2013; “*Bangladesh Institute of Research and Training on Applied Nutrition (BIRTAN)*”
 - Enacted the Formalin Control Act 2014; Bangladesh Food Safety Regulations 2014;
 - National Nutrition Survey (NNS), 20 components: Revision of Breast Milk Substitute (BMS) code, 2013; and.
 - Country Investment Plan (CIP) monitoring mechanism engaging 13 partner ministries
- Open market sales (OMS) to keep the food price stable;
 - Day care services for the children of Working Women;
 - Mid-day meal for Working Women, increased maternity leave;
 - old age allowances (Boyosko Vata), allowances for persons with disabilities grants etc.

Mr. Chairperson

- Bangladesh has moved from deficit to surplus in food production and now moving towards high quality food production and value addition to ensure food safety and quality.
- Wet land conservation and culture of Small Indigenous Species (SIS) of fish as potential nutrient dense source of vitamin A and minerals like Ca, P, Zn could prevent a number of infant and child disease.
- In terms of poverty, food security and nutrition, environmental vulnerability and livelihoods of the people from the coastal parts are struggled. Realizing the unexploited rice production potential in the southern regions as indicated in the Master Plan is providing additional opportunity to release land and other resources for production diversification.

Mr. Chairperson

- We are using our flagship health programme - the Community Health Clinics for catering nutrition services along with health and population services at the grass root level.
- Bangladesh has made remarkable progress in nutrition sensitive sectors like education, women empowerment, social safety nets, Water-sanitation and hygiene.
- For better coordination between multiple sectors and actors, we are considering creating an over-arching national supervisory mechanism and thus is considering to revitalize Bangladesh National Nutrition Council.

Finally, Mr. Chairperson, before I close, we are fully endorsing the Rome Declaration and committing to work with the Framework for Action of ICN2. Let me assure you that Government of Bangladesh is committed *to tackling up these challenges at all levels* to achieve the improvement of nutrition and food safety goal.

Thank you all