



INTERNATIONAL FOOD POLICY
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sustainable solutions for ending hunger and poverty
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Opportunities and Options to End Hunger in Bangladesh

Dhaka—Nearly 250 high-level policymakers, leading researchers, and representatives of development organizations are gathering here from October 4-5 to discuss investment plans, priorities, and policies to advance agricultural development, achieve food and nutrition security, and improve the health and well-being of all Bangladeshi citizens. The policy workshop titled “Enhancing Food Security in Bangladesh: Evidence for Action” is organized by the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) with support from the US Agency for International Development (USAID).

With the highest population density in the world, little arable land, and frequent natural disasters, Bangladesh has often struggled to feed its population. However, the country has achieved some important successes. Bangladesh tripled its annual rice production in the space of only three decades, its infant mortality rate has declined dramatically, and its homestead food production programs have been effective in tackling malnutrition by providing food rich in key vitamins and minerals.

Despite these accomplishments, food security challenges remain and new risks, such as climate change, are emerging. Fifty million people in Bangladesh still live in extreme poverty, and 36 million are chronically hungry or malnourished. More than 40 percent of Bangladeshi children lack the nutrition they need for healthy lives.

To address these challenges, last year IFPRI and its local partners launched the Policy Research and Strategy Support Program (PRSSP) for Food Security and Agricultural Development in Bangladesh with funding from USAID. The program aims to generate and share research findings, fill critical gaps in knowledge, stimulate dialogue among key stakeholders, and inform evidence-based policymaking.

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“Bangladesh’s past successes highlight the importance of combining investments in agriculture with well-functioning institutions, policy reforms, social safety net programs, and market incentives to achieve food security,” said Akhter Ahmed, IFPRI Senior Research Fellow and Chief of Party of the PRSSP. “By bringing scientists and decisionmakers together, IFPRI hopes to bridge the gap between research and policy, and provide concrete information, detailed data, and in depth analysis on which wise choices and investments can be made, with the ultimate goal of creating real impact in people’s lives.”

Conference participants will share project achievements to date, discuss the policy implications of new research, determine future plans and priorities, and grapple with critical questions, including:

- What are the key constraints to agricultural growth and trade?
- What barriers do women face in generating income to purchase and allocate food within their households?
- How can smallholders’ market access, trade opportunities, and incomes be increased?
- How can agriculture be leveraged to improve the nutrition of the country's poorest citizens, including women, children, and other vulnerable groups?

“Recognizing and strengthening the links between agriculture, nutrition, and health has great potential to reduce malnutrition and enhance human well-being,” said Marie Ruel, Director of IFPRI’s Poverty, Health, and Nutrition Division. “For many poor farming households, what they grow is what they eat. Diversifying agriculture could lead to more diverse—and nutritious—diets, which would in turn result in better health, particularly among women and children.”

Evidence shows that empowering women, improving child and maternal health, and targeting nutrition interventions to children during the first thousand days of life—from the onset of a woman’s pregnancy to her child’s second birthday—are also critical to achieving food and nutrition security and ensuring the long-term health and productivity of future generations.

“Although the battle against hunger is complicated,” said Dr. Ahmed, “I’m confident that with the appropriate investments, sound policies, and effective partnerships, the future of Bangladesh is one in which every citizen has sufficient access to safe and nutritious food to lead healthy lives.”

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The International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) seeks sustainable solutions for ending hunger and poverty. IFPRI is one of 15 centers supported by the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research, an alliance of 64 governments, private foundations, and international and regional organizations. www.ifpri.org