



BANGLADESH FOOD SECURITY INVESTMENT FORUM 2010

26–27 May 2010 • Pan Pacific Sonargaon • Dhaka

Inaugural Session
26 May 2010 • Dhaka, Bangladesh

Address by
Mr. Md. Abdul Latif Biswas, MP, Honourable Minister,
Ministry of Fisheries and Livestock
Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

Respected Chairman, Dr. Muhammad Abdur Razzaque, Honourable Minister, Ministry of Food and Disaster Management

Chief Guest, Hon'ble Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

Special Guests:

Begum Matia Chowdhury, Honourable Minister, Ministry of Agriculture
Dr. Rajiv Shah, USAID Administrator,
Guest of Honor Representatives from the different development agencies

Secretary, Food Division,
Diplomats, Dignitaries, Distinguished Guests and Participants
Representatives from the Media
Ladies and Gentlemen

Assalamu Alaikum and very good morning to all!

I am extremely happy to be here at the inaugural session of the 'Bangladesh Food Security Investment Forum 2010' which is being organized by the Food Division, Ministry of Food and Disaster Management with active support from partner Ministries and partners of our development. I would like to congratulate the organizers for this timely initiative, especially Dr. Abdur Razzak the Honorable Minister, Ministry of Food and Disaster Management.

Ladies and gentlemen, in our country, we have been a saying from our older generations, '*Mache bhate bangalee and Dhoothe bhate bangalee* which means the traditional Bengali dish is composed of fish and rice or milk and rice. In another way, it says, '*if you have rice in your store, fish in your pond, you belong to a household of pride and prestige*'. But this notion of individual level self sufficiency has eroded over time due to fragmentation of land, population growth, disintegration of household assets, loss of ecosystem of common property resources, and market dependent economy in general. In recent times, of course, the policy analysts advocate for reviving homestead production of vegetables, poultry and fishes; thanks to the international and national experts to understand the culture, the ground reality of our nation.

Our vision 2021 is to gain self sufficiency not only in the rice and crop food production but also in fish , milk , meat and egg production. Only then we can claim to have complete food security in the country. The Government of Bangladesh considers agriculture, food security and nutrition as one of its most important priorities in which fisheries and livestock sector have enormous potential to contribute at all levels-national, regional, household and individual. More importantly these sectors help reduce poverty through employment generation, sustain rural livelihoods, earn foreign currency through exports, provide draft power, bio-fertilizer and transport, etc.

Distinguished participants, I would like to share a few facts of the contribution of fisheries and livestock sector to our economy. The fisheries sector is very vibrant nowadays which contribute about 20% of agricultural GDP, where as the livestock sector contributes around 12%. More than 10 million people are directly depending for their livelihood in the fisheries sector and part time employment of about 33 million people. Similarly investment in small holder dairy, meat and egg production may generate additional employment of about 24 million people in next five years time. We have seen decent growth in these sectors in recent years. The drivers of this growth can commonly be attributed to input support, credit provision, provision of services, increased participation of small holder farmers, increased investment and improved marketing infrastructure.

But still a huge gap exists between production and demand of milk, meat and eggs. Fish production in the inland open water, particularly in the rivers and flood plains has declined significantly during the last three decades due to degradation of water bodies. This has led more dependency on culture fisheries where landless and poor fishers have little access to retain their livelihood.

The challenges facing the livestock and fisheries sectors are wide yield gap, shortage of feeds and fodder, low coverage of services, governance of programs, quality control, drugs, vaccines, breeding materials, organized market and low value addition. In view of the challenges, the Government has identified priority areas of investment in line with the PRSP, National Food Policy Plan of Action, National Fisheries Policy 1998, National Poultry Development Policy 2008 and National Livestock Development Policy 2007. I hope the paper on 'Development of Fisheries and Livestock Sectors' have taken full consideration of Government's policies and priorities. I would like to put emphasis on addressing climate change impacts on these sectors as well.

Dear participants,

I am very happy to see the festivity of the Forum-the way it has been organized in coordination with partners, the way the papers have been prepared in a short time taking inputs from partner Ministries and expert assistance from internationally reputed organizations, the way it has been participated by international celebrities, high officials and experts from international development partners, UN organizations, partner Ministries and civil society. I congratulate all for their interest in the development of the livelihood and food security of our people. It seems to me as a unique example of cooperation and coordination between our Government and partners of progress.

I feel honored to be here with you all. Our Ministry is happy to work as an active partner of the food security forum. We are committed to attain our goals under the visionary leadership of the honorable Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, who is bearing the blood of our father of the nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahaman.

I strongly believe the development partners will continue to support to our development efforts in

the years to come.

I know we are eagerly waiting to listen to the guiding speech from the Chief Guest, the Hon'ble Prime Minister, Sheikh Hasina.

I look forward to seeing a broad based consensus towards a Comprehensive Food Security Investment Plan for the country. I would also request our development partners to commit and come forward to invest in the priority areas that are being set through this Forum.

I wish all success of this important Forum.

Thank you all.

Joy Bangla. Joy Bangabandhu. Bangladesh Chirojibi Hok.