

In spite of losses incurred by farmers over the last 6 years, the area of land where potatoes are cultivated in Bangladesh has been gradually increasing over the last 10 years.

**Potato production shows a lot of potential for income growth for farmers.**

Currently Bangladesh produces around 11 million metric tons of potatoes annually, of which 4 million are exportable surpluses. However farmers are not able to reap the full benefits of this surplus due to limited cold storage capacity (only 23% of potatoes make it to storage), the absence of standard phyto-sanitary labs and a lack of good agricultural practices among growers.

In response to this, the Bangladesh Potato Exporters Association (BPEA), Sara Bangla Krishak Society (SBKS), the Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE) and the MMI-Bangladesh A2F+ project of FAO jointly organized '**Meet the Exporters**'. The overarching aim of the event was to find ways to ensure better prices for potato growers, by:

- understanding the demands of exporters in terms of variety, size and grade, as well as international standards and production practices;
- exploring opportunities for potato export and joint investment in good agricultural practices, and;
- connecting potato growers directly with exporters.

Following a robust, open discussion, all participants unanimously agreed that potato export is the only viable solution to absorb surpluses. In order for it to work effectively, however, it needs holistic investment from farm to fork. This investment must include education on **good agricultural practices**, establishment of accredited **phyto-sanitary testing labs to ensure food safety** and the establishment of **cold storage facilities** to keep potato surpluses from spoiling as they wait to be sold.

## Who Participated?

Bangladesh Potato Exporters Association

Department of Agricultural Extension

Plant Quarantine Wing (Export), DAE

Field Service Wing, DAE

DAE Regional and Local Officials

Potato Growers of 3 MMI Producers Organizations

Sara Bangla Krishak Society

## AS A RESULT OF THE EVENT...

1. An extended collaboration was established to provide training on good agricultural practices during pre-production, pre & post harvest phases for potato growers. FAO, MMI producer organizations, BPEA, the Plant Quarantine Wing (Export) and the Field Service Wing of DAE all agreed to come together for this purpose.
2. Ethical and safe potato production practices were established.
3. Potato exporters and growers built relationships and even went as far as placing orders.

## Potatoes in Bangladesh

7<sup>th</sup> largest producer worldwide

469,000 hectares cultivated in 2019

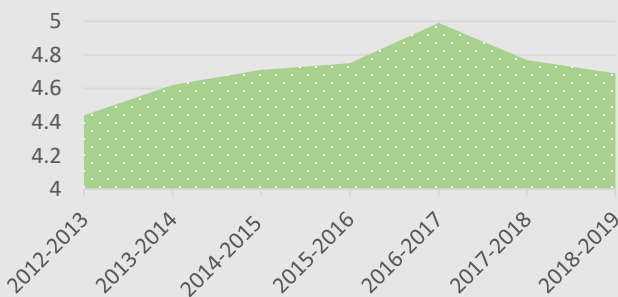
yearly production of **11** million MT

20% grown in Rangpur region

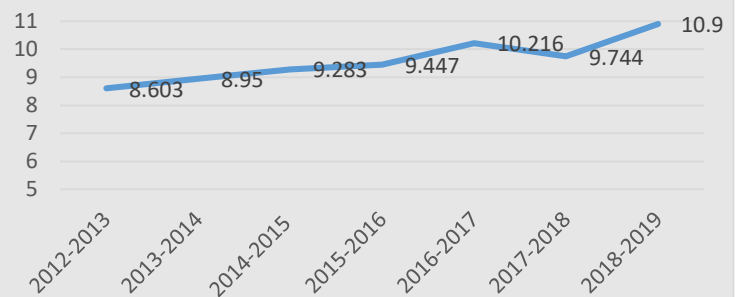
4 million MT annual exportable surpluses

2-3 billion BDT export earnings/year

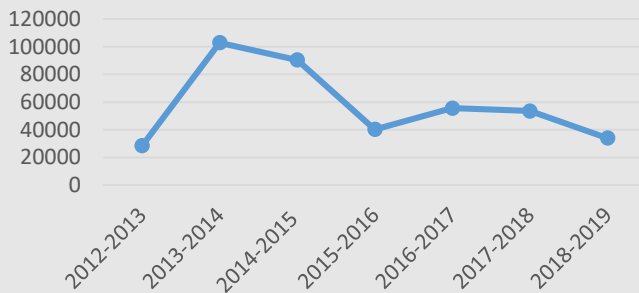
Area Covered in Lakh (100,000) Hectares



Quantity Produced, Million Metric Tons (MT)



Potato Export, MT



Major **importing** countries:

**Malaysia** **Sri Lanka** **Singapore**

**UAE** **Brunei** **Nepal**

**Potentials upcoming: Russia** **Fiji**

### FEEDBACK FROM PARTICIPANTS

The buyer-seller meeting brought potato export value chain actors together to find a solution to engross potato surpluses in Bangladesh. Mr Zakir Hossain, Secretary to the BPEA, said “We have never met smallholder potato growers directly before, only touched base with agents and a few large growers. This event indeed is a bridge between us – especially with potato producers organizations (POs) where we explored the possibility for community investment.”



“Cultivating potato is a legacy of northern smallholders, whether it incurs profit or loss. Assist us in getting exportable variety, our soil will give you best potato” – Azizar Rahman, Treasurer, Sara Bangla Krishak Society and potato grower of Mithapukur Upazila