



THE NATIONAL SEED POLICY

Ministry of Agriculture

Section-12

Quality seed is considered to be the basic input for increasing agricultural output and thereby achieving self-sufficiency in food production. Effectiveness of other inputs like fertilizer and irrigation depends largely on good seed. But use of improved seed is still very limited. Two major reasons behind this fact are:

- Production and distribution of quality seed is insufficient in the public sector as compared to its demand;
- Seed production in the private sector has not yet got the necessary support.

Development of facilities in public and private sectors for production of sufficient quantity of improved seed and for making them available to the farmers at appropriate time and at reasonable price has been suffering from lack of definite policy directives. At the same time potentiality of technical assistance could not be explored due to absence of a clear Govt. policy in this field. With a view to overcoming this critical situation the MOA has formulated a National Seed Policy for the country.

A committee, formed by the MOA, reviewed the seed policies of a number of neighbouring countries and drafted a National Seed Policy drawing lessons and inputs from the experiences of countries having similar agro-ecological and socio-economic settings.

National Seed Policy provides for policy directives to increase production of improved seed both in the public and private sectors and for making best quality seeds available to the farmers on timely basis, and at competitive price. The seed policy has also provisions, among other things, for liberalisation of import of seed and seed processing machineries, strengthening of quality control and research system and maintaining a seed security arrangement. A major thrust of the seed policy has been on the institutional arrangement of the seed sector.

National Seed Board has approved the draft of National Seed Policy The Seed Policy of Bangladesh

1. Objectives of the Seed Policy:

1.1. Overall Objectives:

The overall purpose of this policy is to make the best quality seeds of improved varieties of crops conveniently and efficiently available to farmers with a view to increasing crop production, farmer's productivity, per capita farm income and export earnings.

1.2 Specific Objectives:

1. To breed, develop and maintain improved crop varieties with special emphasis on those suitable for high-input and high-output agriculture.
2. To multiply and distribute, on a timely basis, to all farmers sufficient quantities of quality seed of improved high yielding varieties that are resistant or tolerant to disease and insect pests.
3. To promote farmer's acceptance and use of improved varieties of seeds.
4. To promote, through education, training and financial supports, balanced development of public and private sector seed enterprises.
5. To simplify the importation, for research and commercial purposes, of high quality seeds and planting materials.
6. To promote seed technology by providing training and technical supports to agricultural specialists and professionals, farmers and workers, and private seed growers and merchants in seed production, processing, storage and use of high quality seeds.
7. To monitor control and regulate the quality and quantity of seeds produced as well as development and commercialisation of the seed industry.

2. Strategy for Seed Development:

To achieve the above objectives, the following strategies, among others, are to be followed:

- 2.1 To strengthen the institutional capability of the public and private sector entities engaged in the seed industry.
- 2.2 To evolve and/or adapt seed technology to meet the needs of high-input and high-output agriculture.
- 2.3 To promote balanced development of the seed sector by providing equitable opportunities to the public and private sector at all stages of the seed industry from breeding to marketing of seeds.
- 2.4 To simplify procedures for import of high quality seeds and planting materials, both by the public and private sectors to enable farmers to have access to the best quality materials available in the world.
- 2.5 To strengthen seed certification, quality control and testing facilities to ensure availability of quality seeds to farmers.
- 2.6 To simplify procedures for effective observance of plant quarantine.

3. Development and Promotion of Improved Seed Varieties:

- 3.1 Variety development programmes should, as a matter of priority, be focused on generation of high-input and high-output technologies.
- 3.2 The NARS will continue to pursue plant breeding programs for all crops of national importance. However, special efforts will be made to evolve improved varieties for pulses, oil seeds, tuber crops, vegetables, fruits and spices.
- 3.3 Improved varieties of seeds and planting materials should be procured and introduced in the country by allowing their import, especially through private seed entrepreneurs. For this purpose, business contracts, including joint ventures, are to be encouraged between private enterprises and foreign seed companies.
- 3.4 Private persons, companies and other agencies will be encouraged to undertake plant breeding programs and will be allowed to import breeder/foundation seeds of notified crops for variety development and promotion purposes.

4. Approval and Registration of Varieties:

- 4.1 New varieties of wheat, rice, jute, potato and sugarcane developed by private or public agencies will be subject to notification by the National Seed Board.
- 4.2. Varieties of all other crops developed by public research agencies will be subject to an internal review and approval by each respective agency and must be registered with NSB before being released.
- 4.3 Varieties of crops, other than rice, wheat, jute potato and sugarcane that are imported or locally developed by a private person, company or agency must be registered with the NSB giving prescribed cultivar descriptions, but will not be subject to any other restrictions.
- 4.4 In the event a variety of seed is found to be harmful or potentially harmful to the country's agriculture, the NSB will prohibit the sale of that variety.

5. Variety Release:

The variety release and variety notification function will be separated. The NSB shall notify varieties of seeds under the provisions of the Seeds Ordinance. The release of varieties of controlled crops such as rice, wheat, jute, potato and sugarcane, or those added by NSB, shall vest in a Technical Committee headed by Executive Vice-Chairman, BARC and consisting of representatives of major research institutions (BARI, BRRI, BJRI, SRTI), SCA, DAE, BADC, private sector Seed Growers and Farmers Associations.

6. Maintenance Breeding:

Maintenance breeding and breeder seed multiplication is to be improved and strengthened at the NARS. For this purpose, required facilities, equipment, trained personnel etc, shall be provided at the respective research centres and stations.

7. Seed Multiplication:

- 7.1 Breeder and Foundation seed, of all varieties will be made available through negotiation to duly registered seed producers both in the private and public sector.
- 7.2 BADC will concentrate primarily on producing foundation seeds of rice, wheat, jute, potato and sugarcane on its own farms.

7.3 BADC will use farmers to multiply seeds on a contract basis and will gradually cease to grow certified seed on its own seed farms.

8. Import of Seeds:

8.1. Except for appropriate plant quarantine safeguards, restrictions on importation of seeds are to be eliminated. Approved varieties of rice, wheat, jute, potato and sugarcane may be imported for commercial sale. However, registered seed growers will be permitted to import small quantities of seeds of rice, wheat, jute, potato and sugarcane for adaptability testing.

8.2 The Plant Quarantine Regulations provided under the Destructive Insect and Pest Act 1966 (as amended upto 1989) are to be reviewed and reformed with a view to simplifying procedures to facilitate import of high quality seeds and planting materials. Plant quarantine procedures will be made applicable to crop/plant species and not to specific varieties.

9. Seed Regulations:

9.1 Controlled crops:

The NSB shall designate kinds and varieties of crops that are to be notified. Initially, rice, wheat, jute, potato and sugarcane will be the only notified crops. Release of the varieties of notified crops will be subject to evaluation and testing by the Technical Committee on Seeds. Varieties of all other crops will have to be registered prior to being sold, but there will be no requirement for prior testing and approval.

9.2 Registration of Varieties:

Any variety, whether imported or developed in Bangladesh, must registered with the National Seed Board. The registration will require the characteristics and attributes of the variety to be described.

Registration will be a relatively easy process designed to facilitate legitimate identification. Except for controlled or notified crops, registration will not involve testing or any other procedure.

9.3 Registration of Seed Dealers:

Any individual, company or agency that wishes to import seed, develop and register new seed varieties, or package seed in labelled containers must first be registered with the National Seed Board. Registration will be automatic by paying the prescribed fees.

9.4 Labelling of Seeds:

Anyone packaging seed in labelled containers must do so in accordance with requirements prescribed under the seeds rules. The labelling requirements will specify variety of crop, lot number or batch identification, net weight or count, minimum germination percentage, physical purity, name and address of the company packaging the seed and the date of packaging.

9.5 Seed Certification:

Seed certification will be a service provided to private individuals, companies or public agencies who wish to assure their farmercustomers that their seeds are of high quality. Although seed certification. will be voluntary, public sector breeder/foundation seeds will be certified as a matter of policy.

9.6 Seed Quality Control:

Seed quality will be ensured by requiring seeds in labelled containers/packages to meet the standards specified on the label. Seed dealers who develop a good reputation will be protected by making it illegal for anyone to sell seeds in a labelled container that copies the name or trademark of any registered seed dealer.

10. Seed Security:

BADC and NARS will be required to maintain small stocks of improved varieties of rice, wheat and jute seeds so that when natural disasters occur, and seed supplies in an area are lost; seed of superior quality will be available for distribution. The amount of seed to be stored will be subject to further assessment and budgetary considerations.

11. Strengthening Institutional Capability of the Seed Sector:

11.1. Strengthening NSB:

11.1.1 The NSB will be strengthened through necessary amendments in the Seed Laws to establish it as the highest authority for policymaking and planning for development of the national seeds system.

11.1.2 Reorganization of NSB:

The NSB will be reconstituted as follows to ensure representation of all concerned with the development of the seed industry:

1. Secretary, MOA	Chairman
2. Vice Chairman, BARC	Member
3. Heads of National Research Institutions (BARI, BRRI, BJRI, BAU, SRTI, BINA, Cotton Board)	Members (7)
4. Director General, DAE	Member
5. Chairman, BADC	Member
6. Member Director (Seeds), BADC	Member
7. Representative of Seed Growers Association	Member
8. Representative of Seed Merchants Association	Member
9. Director Seed Certification Agency	Member
10. Director Plant Protection, DAE	Member
11. Representative of Ministry of Finance	Member
12. Representative of Farmer's Association	Member
13. Director General (Seed), MOA	Member-Secretary

11.1.3. Creating a Seeds Wing in the Ministry of Agriculture:

A Seed Wing will be created in the Ministry of Agriculture, primarily to serve as a Secretariat for the NSB, and to perform among others, the following functions:

1. to help update policies and plan strategies for the development of the seed industry with special attention given to promoting private sector seed enterprises and to ensure implementation of such policies and strategies;
2. to monitor development and commercialisation of the seed sector;
3. to oversee and co-ordinate the production of breeder and foundation seed by public and private seed enterprises to meet farmer's demands;
4. to promote human resource development in the seed sector through training, seminars and workshops;
5. to develop a permanent cadre of trained and experienced seed technologists in public sector institutes to ensure sustained growth of the seed industry;

6. to plan and promote seed technology research in the NARS, BAD and the private sector;
7. to plan and implement a seed security system including maintenance of buffer stocks of seeds;

11.2. Strengthening of BADC-Seed Wing:

11.2.1 Reorganization of the Seed Wing:

- (a) The Seed Wing is to run on a commercial basis as far as possible and be given control over the planning and financing of its operation.
- (b) The Seed Wing will be reorganized to include such as Seed Production Division, Seed Conditioning, Processing and Storage Division, Seed Marketing Division with an internal quality control system, and an Administration Division.

11.2.2 Roles and Functions:

The role and function of the Seed Wing should include, among others, the following:

- (a) Foundation seed production of all publicly developed varieties of controlled crops.
- (b) Production of other kinds of seeds on a "level playing field" in competition with the Private Sector. BADC should gradually withdraw from production of those kinds of seeds undertaken by the private sector.
- (c) The Seed Wing should provide technical assistance and other support/services to promote the development of a private sector seed industry.

11.2.3 Seed Pricing and Subsidies:

BADC's seed prices should reflect costs more closely and subsidies should be phased out gradually.

11.2.4 Resources and Facilities:

BADC's seed multiplication farms will be turned to other uses except those most suitable for foundation seed production. All production beyond the foundation seed class, and including foundation seed if possible, will be done by contract growers. Excess facilities, especially those of smaller scale, will be made available on a lease basis to the private sector for growing seeds.

11.2.5 Marketing:

The seed sale centres at the Upazila level will be phased out and replaced with a network of seed dealers. The regional and transit seed centres will be designated and developed as "lifting" sites for private sector dealers.

11.2.6 Reserve Seeds Stocks:

The Seed Wing will be given management and operational responsibility for seed security stocks with budget allocation for this purpose.

11.2.7 Local/Improved/Popular Varieties:

The BADC-Seed Wing will be authorized to purify and maintain local varieties for which there is substantial and steady demand. Purification and maintenance will be done on the seed farms.

11.2.8 BADC's role will be reoriented to promote development of the private sector seed industry by:

- (a) advising and training private seed producers to produce, process, store and market quality seeds;
- (b) advise private seed entrepreneurs to manage and finance their seed companies;
- (c) custom process, test and store, if convenient, seed of private entrepreneurs at BADC's facilities;
- (d) negotiate with private sector seed enterprises for potential take-over of BADC's Contract Grower's Scheme;
- (e) providing seed-testing facilities to private seed entrepreneurs.

11.3 Support for Seed Businesses:

11.3.1 The business of seed breeding, multiplication, production processing, import and marketing should be declared as an agrobased industry under the Industrial Investment Schedule to make such companies eligible for various incentives, supports and concessions.

11.3.2 Individuals, companies or agencies engaged in the seed business should be allowed easy access to institutional credit at preferential rates of interest.

11.3.3 Foreign Exchange:

Importers of seeds and seed processing equipment will be made eligible for allotment of foreign exchange. Seed merchants will be allowed to enter into supplier's credit arrangements with foreign seed suppliers.

11.3.4 Access to Facilities and Equipment:

private sector seeds men will be granted access to storage space, drying floors, dryers, cleaning equipment, and related equipment and facilities that are in excess of BADC-Seed Wing needs. Access will be through custom services, lease, or lease-purchase arrangements.

11.3.5 Technical Assistance and Services:

Technical assistance, training and services from BADC-Seeds Wing, DAE, Research Institutes, NSTL, SCA and other public sector units involved in the seeds industry will be made available to private sector seeds men on request for a reasonable fee in connection with services such as seed testing, certification and inspection. The private sector will be granted access to or included in all donor assisted and organized seed related training courses, workshops and study tours. In cases where expert technical assistance is brought into Bangladesh under donor financed seed related projects, the technical assistance and services will also be made available to the private sector. The Bangladesh Seeds Merchants Association and the Bangladesh Seed Producers Association will be used as a mechanism for communicating with the private sector.

11.3.6 Private Sector Representation in Seed Policy Making:

The private sector will be allowed representation in the National Seed Board, Variety Release Committee, and in any special committee constituted for or in the interest of seed production in Bangladesh.

11.3.7 Concessions and Incentives:

Favourable policies, incentives, and support will be provided to promote private sector participation in the seed industry.

11.4. Strengthening of the Seed Certification Agency (SCA):

To facilitate implementation of the new Seed Policy, the role of SCA will be expanded beyond seed certification to include seed quality control and testing and enforcement of seed regulations. For this purpose the SCA will be strengthened by provision of expanded infrastructure and laboratory facilities, increased number of trained seed technologists, and gradual development of a seed sub-cadre. The expanded role of SCA will be to:

1. advise seed producers on production, processing and quality control of seeds;
2. carry out post-market quality control through inspection, testing;
3. collect data/information on seed production, processing and quality control for use by the NSB;
4. certify all Breeder and Foundation seed of controlled crops;
5. certify seeds for seed enterprises as a service, if resources permit;
6. co-ordinate the variety evaluation and release mechanism for notified crops;
7. advise NSB on the denotification of varieties for reasons of poor performance or disease and pest susceptibility;
8. help DAE in the promotion and use of improved seed of HYV's among farmers;
9. collect samples of truthfully labelled seeds throughout the country and check their declared standards through appropriate tests;

11.5. National Agricultural Research System (NARS):

Varietal development by NARS should anticipate the increase in irrigated high-input, high-output cropping systems and adapt their crop species and variety selection criteria accordingly. With an increasing demand of food per unit area PY a fast expanding population, it is imperative that NARS respond by releasing seeds of high-input responsive crop varieties into the agricultural sector. In particular, the use of hybrids must be expanded. To achieve this, the NARS will:

- 1) reorientated its plant breeding programmes to develop varieties that respond to sustainable high-input, high-output technology especially emphasising diversified crops, such as oilseeds, pulses, cereals (other than rice), vegetables, fruits, etc. that fit into rice-based cropping systems. The NARS will need to respond to farmer's current demands for varieties and crops;
- 2) design breeding programmes keeping in mind the opportunity of importing improved seed which may be an economic way to obtain improved varieties;
- 3) develop adequate maintenance breeding units at their regional/central research stations;
- 4) co-ordinate variety development programmes between scientists and institutes in both public and private sectors by developing common objectives and testing procedures.

11.6. Department of Agricultural Extension:

DAE will be responsible for promoting newly evolved superior crop varieties. For this purpose DAE will:

- 1) Monitor the farmer's response/demand for varieties .and transmit farmer preferences to the NSB so that adjustments to production of Breeder and Foundation seed can be made;
- 2) Promote new varieties among farmers through demonstration plots;
- 3) Advise NSB on developments in the seed sector;

- 4) Create a suitable career structure for seed technologists in all seed sector agencies so that staff continuity and retention of experience can be achieved;
- 5) Improve facilities at entry points for laboratory testing and post-entry quarantine testing.

11.7. Agricultural Information Services (AIS):

AIS will facilitate dissemination and sharing of information from private and public sector seed agencies and enterprises with the farming public, particularly with respect to promotion of new varieties.

11.8 Bangladesh Agricultural University (BAU):

BAU will undertake the following:

- 1) Establish/strengthen a course in seed technology, which would cover all aspects of the seed industry from seed breeding to its multiplication and distribution, seed policy and seed industry development;
- 2) Develop its seed laboratory as a National Seed Health Laboratory which will, besides supporting the university's teaching functions, regulatory review the seed quarantine requirements and develop seed technology necessary for the production of healthy seed.
- 3) Promote the technology and production of inoculum for legume seeds in both public and private sectors.

By order of the President

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