



Press Release

14 Farmers Organizations Demanded 20% of the National Budget for Agriculture

Reducing Subsidy for Agriculture will be Suicidal for National Food Security

Dhaka, 21 May 2017. Today 14 rights based citizens' and farmers' organizations demanded 20% of the upcoming national budget for agriculture. They also opined that, reducing agriculture subsidy based on the prescription of the WTO, IMF and others will be suicidal towards achieving self-reliance on food and in ensuring food security. They also placed 7 specific demands to consider in the upcoming budget form a press conference held in the National Press Club today. Some key demands are i) Allocation for agriculture should be at least 20% of the total budget. ii) Subsidy for agriculture must be increased, effective utilization of that subsidy must be ensured. iii). National Price Commission is a must to ensure just price for farmers. iv). Ban of import of harmful foreign seeds and promotion of local seeds, and v) Special attention to bring back the golden era of jute.

The press conference titled, "We demand 20% of the budget for agriculture: Reducing Subsidy for Agriculture will be Suicidal for National Food Security" was moderated by Mustafa Kamal Akand, Assistant Director of COAST Trust. Among others Syed Aminul Haque, Secretary of EquityBD, Badrul Alam, President Bangladesh Krishak Federation, Sajeda Begum, President of Kendriy Krishak Moitri, Zayed Iqbal Khan, president of Bangladesh Krishak Federation (Ji) also spoke at the occasion. On behalf of the organizers, Md Mujibul Haque Munir, Assistant Director of COAST Trust presented the group's position paper.

In the position paper, Md. Mujibul Haque Said, more than 50% of the total populations of Bangladesh depend on agriculture for livelihood, about 45% of total labour force are engaged in this sector. But the growth rate of agriculture is declining almost every year. In 2010, the growth rate was 6.5% and it is 2.6% in 2016. Rapid shrinkage of agricultural land (1% per year) and rapid urbanization (12% in each year) are making the sector vulnerable. So, to make Bangladesh self-reliance in food allocation for agriculture must be increased proportionately. But allocation for agriculture in the national budget is declining on a regular basis. Allocation for agriculture in current budget is only 4.30% of the total budget. Last year budget for the agriculture ministry was 5.12%. So, agriculture gets 0.82% lower allocation compared to the previous year budget. This trend must be changed. About 20% of the total budget should be allocated for agriculture.

Syed Aminul Haque said, WTO, IMF and other international agencies are forcing to reduce the subsidy in agriculture. According to WTO Nairobi decision developing countries will remove subsidies within 2023, Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and net food-importing countries will do that within 2030. It means countries like Bangladesh has to stop all its supports towards agriculture. Exporting rice is a very dangerous decision for Bangladesh. If rice is considered as an export item, Bangladesh will not be allowed to provide subsidy even in rice cultivation which will be very much suicidal for us.

Badrul Alam Said, we demand Just Price Commission to ensure just and fair price of the farmers' production. Farmers are not getting just price of the products due to faulty market mechanism. Middlemen are capturing all the benefits of the hard work of marginal farmers. The time of the paddy collection from farmers must be changed.

Zayed Iqbal Khan Said, to save our agriculture we need to save the land. In every year about 10 lakh people are losing their almost everything due to river erosion. We demand special allocation for the protection of farmers from river erosion, tidal surge and sea level rise.

Sajeda Begum said, Bangladesh is one of the most vulnerable countries due to climate change. Our farmers must be provided capacity building support so that they can face the challenges of climate change.

Report Prepared By

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