

SRI Farmers' Field Day Session in Gaibandha, Bangladesh
12 May 2007

A crop-cutting and farmers' field day session was held in the village of Dhumaidhari, in Sundergonj Upazila of Gaibandha district on 12 May 2007 to share learning from SRI trials in the *boro* (winter rice) season 2006-07. Various partner NGOs of Oxfam GB Bangladesh (SSUS, ZIBIKA, SKS, GUK, RSDA, Padakhep and POPI) have been implementing SRI with resource-poor farmers in the northern *Char* region and the northeastern *Haor* region. Fifty farmers from the northern region and 30 farmers from the NE region participated this season in SRI trials. Officials from the Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE) including local field staff, representatives from the Bangladesh Rice Research Institute (BRRI), the IRRI Representative for Bangladesh, Oxfam and its partner NGOs, the SRI National Network Bangladesh (SRI-NNB), journalists from print and electronic media, and farmers attended the session. A five-member video team from Bangladesh Television (BTV) covered the crop-cutting event.

The local DAE officials, Oxfam partner NGOs and SRI NNB organised the ceremony under patronage of Oxfam GB Bangladesh. The following officials were present from government agricultural extension, rice research, NGOs and Oxfam GB Bangladesh.

1. Mr. Lal Mohammed Miah, Director Training, Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE)
2. Mr. Tariq Hassan, Former Director General, Department of Agricultural Extension, Bangladesh
3. Dr. Zainul Abedin, IRRI Representative in Bangladesh and Team Leader, FoSHoL project Coordination Unit
4. Mr. Akhter Hossain Khan, Principal Scientific Officer, BRRI, Gazipur,, Bangladesh
5. Mr. A. B. S. Siddique Sarker, Senior Scientific Officer, BRRI, Gazipur,, Bangladesh
6. Mr. Kazi Nazim Uddin, Additional Director, Department of Agricultural Extension, Rangpur Region
7. Mr. M. A. Matin, Deputy Director, Department of Agricultural Extension, Gaibandha
8. Mr. Shahadat Hossain, Upazila Agricultural Officer, Sundarganj Gaibandha
9. Mr. Dewan Seraj, Presenter, Video Team, Agricultural Information Service, DAE
10. Prof. A. M. Muazzam Husain, Coordinator, SRI National Network, Bangladesh
11. Mr. Gopal Chowhan, Member EC, SRI National Network, Bangladesh
12. Mr. Naser Shawkat Haider, Project Officer, RBP, Oxfam Bangladesh
13. Mr. Sumon Das, Project Officer, RBP, Oxfam GB Bangladesh.
14. Mr. M. A. Hamid, Executive Director, Somokal Samaj Unnoyan Shangstha (SSUS), Sundarganj, Gaibandha
15. Mr. Liton, Executive Director, Samaj Kallyan Shangstha (SKS), Gaibandha

The farmers took all the officials and other participants to their SRI demonstration plots prior to attending the formal SRI sharing session. During the field visit, visitors observed

the field performance of SRI compared with adjoining rice plots under farmers' practice (FP). Differences between SRI and FP were observed in terms of number of effective tillers, panicles and grain size. Field conditions demonstrated the better performance of SRI; for example, the number of effective tillers in the SRI plot was around 40 (single plant) as against 19-20 (multiple plants) in the FP plot.

An interesting difference between SRI and FP maturation was also clearly visible. Under both practices, the seeds (BRRI *Dhan-29*) were placed in the seed bed on the same date. Fourteen day-old seedlings were transplanted in the SRI plot while 42 day-old seedlings were transplanted in the plot under FP. While rice paddy was ready for harvest in the SRI plot, the crop in the FP plot would require another 8-10 days before it could be harvested.

Local DAE staff conducted the crop cutting of the SRI plot with the help of farmers. The preliminary results of crop cutting indicated a yield rate in the SRI plot of over 8 tons/ha (green-weight at 22% moisture level). Soil was sandy loam with relatively lower fertility as compared to higher mainland areas. According to farmers' eye-estimate, the yield rate in the FP plot was expected to be 5-6 t/ha. The difference appeared to be quite impressive. Around 200 farmers (male and female) attended the field day session. Farmers felt encouraged to see the positive outcome of SRI yield.

After the field visit, both the SRI and non-SRI farmers and the invitees all gathered in a formal sharing session to share their field experience and express their views on SRI. The ED of one partner NGO welcomed the participants. Initially, the farmers shared their views on SRI performance. All the government personnel spoke positively on SRI and assured their cooperation to the farmers. DAE top officials mentioned that they would do their best to assist the farmers in adopting SRI for increasing rice yield to achieve better food security of the resource-poor rice farmers. IRRI Bangladesh Representative suggested that farmers introduce SRI into their existing rice cropping system to get better production. He asked the BRRI researchers to conduct research to identify the problems faced by SRI farmers and to find out solutions. The spokesman from BRRI also recognized the better performance of SRI as he saw in the field and asked the farmers to adopt the practice wherever suitable.

The SRI NNB Coordinator suggested the government should come forward with a formal policy declaration for promotion of SRI as enough evidence was demonstrated to show the superior performance of SRI in Bangladesh and many other rice-producing countries including our neighbours. He also called upon the NGO officials to make their best efforts to promote SRI in Bangladesh in a systematic manner to secure better food security for poor and vulnerable rice farmers. He cited examples of neighbouring countries on the progress in SRI adoption. The representative from Oxfam mentioned that they would like to expand SRI area during the next *boro* season to support more farmers in adopting SRI practices. The session ended with a vote of thanks from the ED of another partner NGO.