

2020

Impact on Farmers due to COVID-19 Outbreak

THE COMMUNITY

01

INTRODUCTION

01

RESEARCH RATIONALE

01

OBJECTIVES

02

METHODOLOGY

03

SOCIAL AND HYGIENE BEHAVIOR

04

ACCESS TO COMMUNAL SERVICE

05

FOOD SECURITY & MENTAL HEALTH

06

ACCESS TO AGRICULTURAL SERVICE

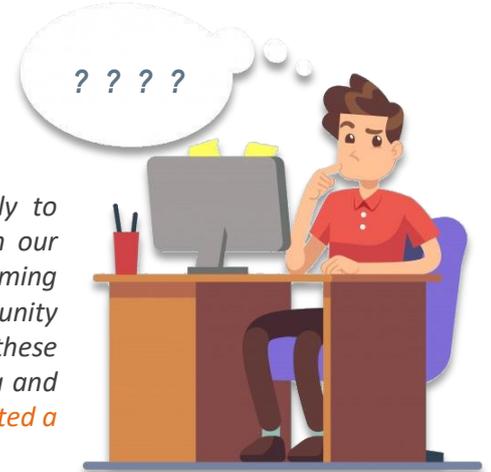
08

COPING MECHANISM



INTRODUCTION

The worldwide outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic has jeopardized agricultural supply chain and overturn the traditional practices of farming. In North and Central Asia countries, the effects of Covid-19 on the agriculture industry span across the value chain, from smallholder farmers to the agriculture processing industry and trade of agriculture and food products.¹ Logically, it is apparent that the food supply and vast labor pool of agriculture will be impacted by this disaster. This new reality hit hard the developing economies like Bangladesh. The intensity of that blow is yet to be known.



RESEARCH RATIONALE

It has been assumed that our agricultural supply chains have moderately to severely been disturbed in Bangladesh, and this has taken a heavy toll on our farming enterprises. And this has been affecting rural people's (mainly farming households') lifestyle, including their food consumption and service (community and agricultural) seeking behavior. Hence, it is essential to understand these dynamics, practices, and impacts to identify problems and social phenomena and recommend the right interventions for them. *With this aim, Consiglieri conducted a survey on farmers in May 2020.*



OBJECTIVES

1. To identify changes in **social & hygiene behavior** in rural farming communities in Bangladesh due to COVID 19 pandemic
2. To understand the changes in their **access to communal and agricultural services**
3. To find out the impact on their **food consumption pattern and family life**
4. To seek out the **coping mechanisms** adopted by farmers to handle the impact of COVID 19 pandemic



¹ Assaubayeva, D. & Yi, P. W. B. 2020, Response to Covid-19 for sustainable agriculture transformation, Financial Express



METHODOLOGY

In the study, the team used **mixed methods considering qualitative and quantitative approaches** during data collection. **Semi structured questionnaire** was used to collect data from the farmers. Though the survey was conducted in the time of Ramadan, the team tried to capture a clear picture of household's food practice. Since the survey was on the second month of Covid-19 outbreak, it was difficult for the team to map out the whole impact regarding our investigation areas.



Telephone Interview Process was used for data collection from farmers



BDT 50 reward was given to each respondent for successful interview



Research Associates used **ODK Platform** for Data collection

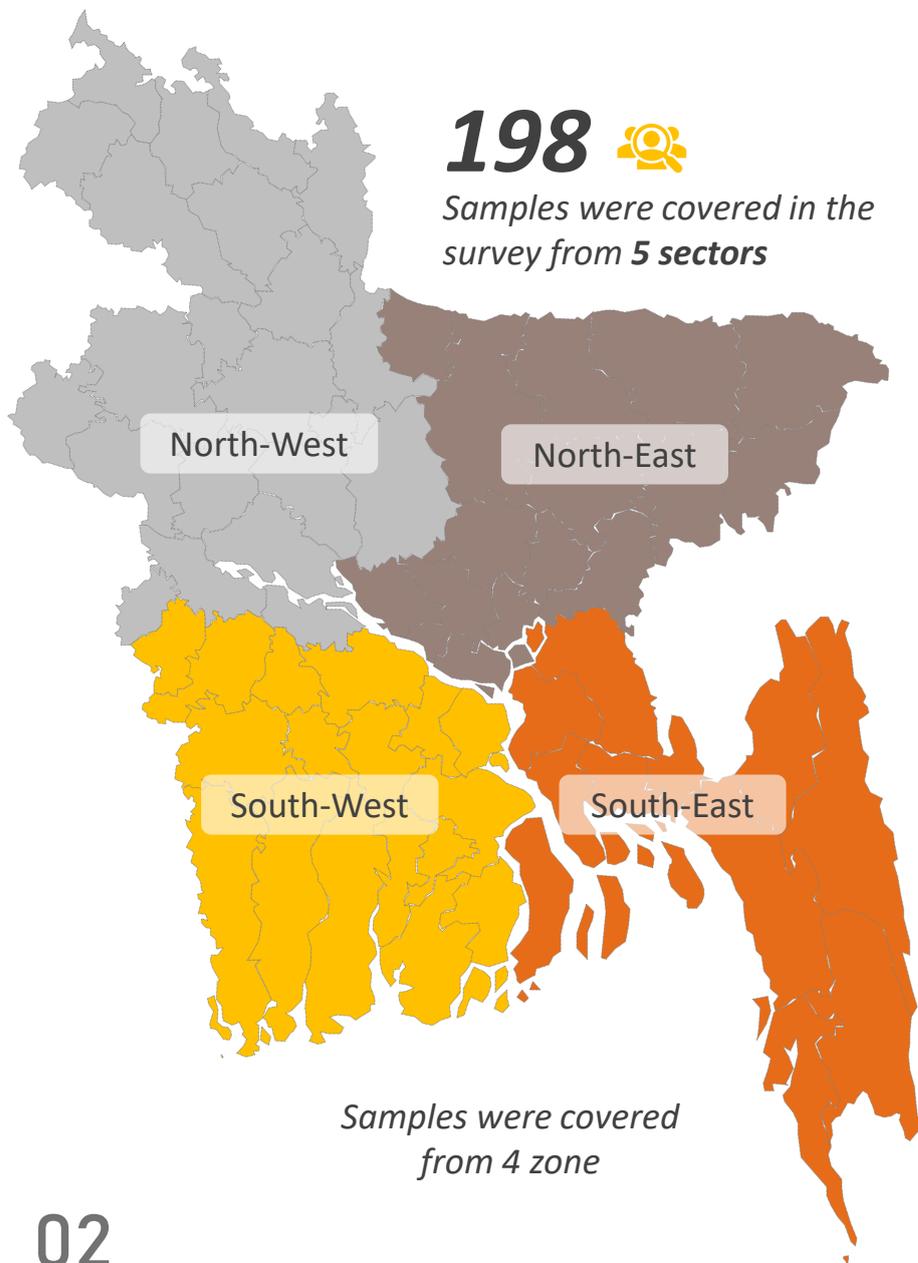


Four research associates conducted the interviews with farmers in **May 2020**.

198

Samples were covered in the survey from **5 sectors**

76% **24%**



Rice Sector



Vegetable Sector



Poultry Sector



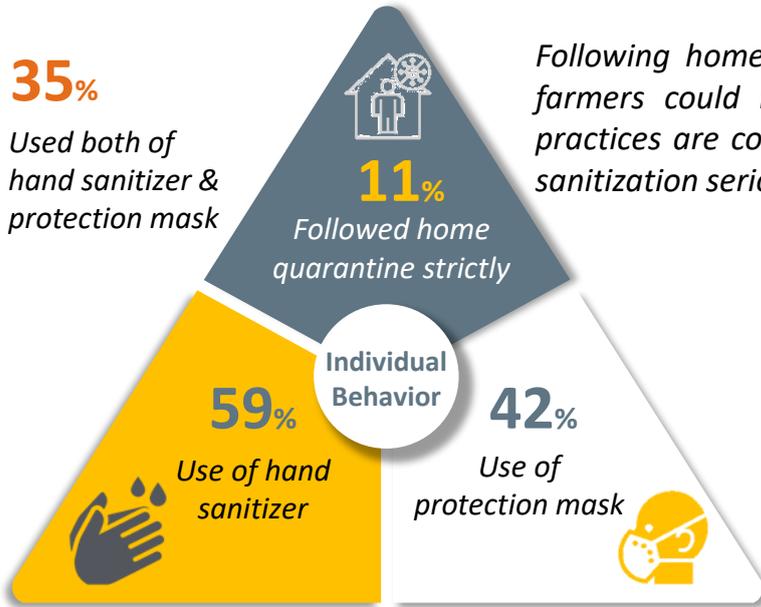
Dairy Sector



Fish Sector

SOCIAL AND HYGIENE BEHAVIOR

(Home quarantine, Protection mask use, Hand sanitizer use)



Following home quarantine is difficult for farmers, only a few farmers could manage to follow it. However the other two practices are comparatively high. The community adopted hand sanitization seriously.

Gender Perspective

Females are more conscious about the COVID-19 outbreak situation and adopted better practices than males considering all the hygiene practice

Hand Sanitization

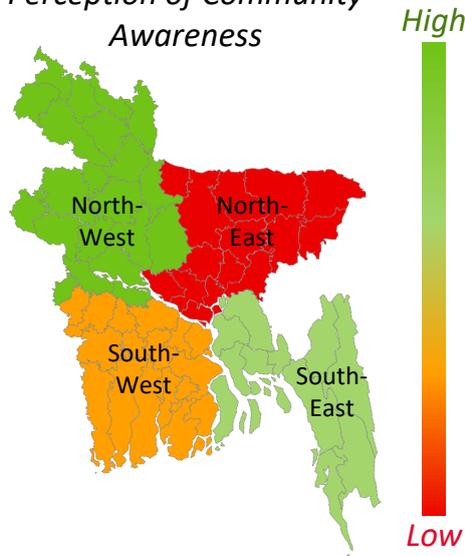


The perception of community awareness and individual hygiene practices were comparatively better in **North-west zone** and **South-East zone**.

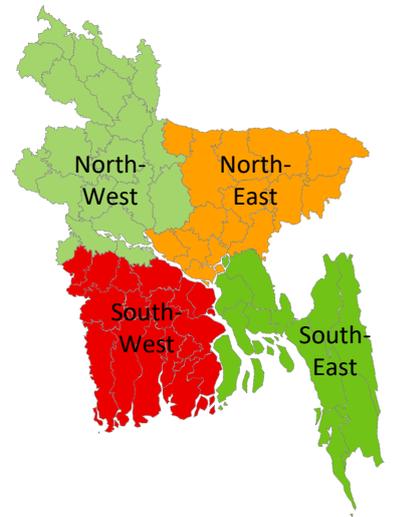
The practice of using **hand sanitizer (76%)** and **protection mask (61%)** was found higher in north-west zone than other three zones.

The practice of using mask was found lowest in **north-east zone (20%)**

Perception of Community Awareness



Individual Hygiene Practice



	Home quarantine	Average hour outside	Protection Mask	Hand Sanitizer
High awareness	22%	13 hours	87%	97%
Low awareness	8%	26 hours	36%	58%

Practice of going outside

Farmers spent average **24 hours** outside home weekly. However this time may vary depending upon the seasons, sectors and their relevant activities

In south-west zone got out more for working as labor

Purpose of going out





ACCESS TO COMMUNAL SERVICE

(Health, Marketplace, Banking, Maintenance)



All of the farmers could access community services. But, almost all them **(96%)** faced **difficulties** accessing to **communal services**.

In many cases, hospitals and community clinics did not provide proper treatment to sick family members of the farmers due to the fear of Covid-19. There were events of panic among community people. Most of the time local medicine shops provide medicine to the people as a primary treatment.

Most of the farmers **(63%)** experienced **limited** access to **health services**



Health

Most of the farmers **(73%)** faced **limited** access to **marketplace** to purchase & sell

- Farmers in **south-east zone** experienced limited access the most
- The hill tract areas had no access to marketplace at all due to very strict lock down
- 71% of farmers faced difficulties accessing to regular groceries or household items



Market place

- Most of the farmers **(61%)** faced limited access to **banking services**
- The farmers could not access to financial services because banks and MFIs were closed. Though many of the farmers did not have to repay any installment for MFI loans, they could not access any new loan either.



Banking

Most of the farmers **(55%)** did not have any impact on access to **electrical/maintenance services**, mostly because of the availability freelance service providers



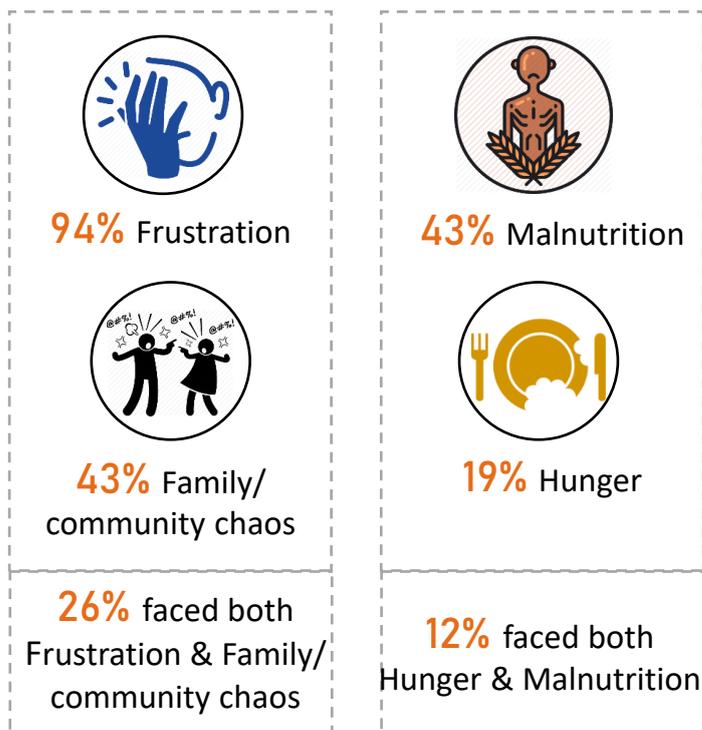
Maintenance

FOOD SECURITY & MENTAL HEALTH



Impact on family members

Most of the farming families (69%) faced problems in their family life due to the pandemic.



Majority of the farmers we have interviewed had alternative income sources for e.g. small businesses, tea stall, rickshaw/van pulling, day labor etc.



On top of the disrupted farming practices these alternative sources were also affected by lockdown. This is what hit them hard on their livelihood.

Impacts	North-East	South-West
Hunger	25%	4%
Malnutrition	44%	10%
Frustration	81%	28%
Family/ community chaos	40%	18%

Poultry sector HHs were the worst sufferer since a **virus hit poultry sector before pandemic** which required rigorous measures like veterinary services from professional doctor and medicine. In the pandemic situation, **farmers could not even manage to buy feed, let alone other extra measures**. In addition, **lack of access to the output market caused the household income sink the lowest** which leads to degrading food security and mental health.



The households of rice farmers were least impacted compared to other sectors. Rice is the least perishable produce among all the sectors considered which is why **rice farmers could store their produce for selling later**. In addition, **rice price was higher than previous few years in the market**. As a result, households of rice sector suffered less in case of livelihood



Family debt were noticed among the farmers in pandemic. The few who took loan were **forced to do so from friends and relatives** due to **lack of resources to buy food for the HH**. It is also noticed that the farmers were indebted because their income from agriculture could not cover their food cost.





ACCESS TO AGRICULTURAL SERVICE

(Input, Output Market and Support Services)

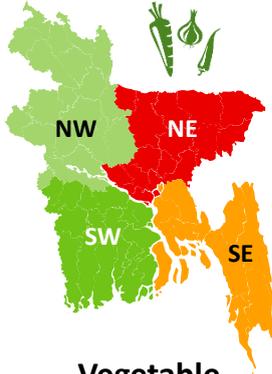
Farmers having better access to agricultural service

Farmers having worst access to agricultural service

Accessibility to services



Lack of access to harvesting labor services (54%)



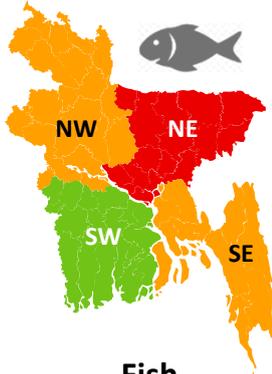
Low sales price of vegetables (90%)



Failed to sell milk (75%)



Failed to sell chicken & eggs (97%)



Low sales price of fish (89%)

Principle Problems

Different problems were clubbed together under three umbrellas of input services, output market and support function. Majority of the farmers faced problems accessing services related to output market.



Access to Output Market



All the farmers have faced severe problem of dropping the regular price of their agricultural produces (72%).



Farmers could not sell their agricultural produces (56%).



As all the sweet shops and tea stalls were closed dairy farmers could sell their products at a regular flow. As a result, many of them had to throw away their huge production.

Market price of fish dropped at first during lockdown, then it increased again due to lack of fish supply in market.



Accessing to the agro-product buyers was another major issue in the output market (51%).





ACCESS TO AGRICULTURAL SERVICE

(Input, Output Market and Support Services)



Access to input services



In the input side, the farmers were limited to access preferred inputs (61%). As it was the harvesting season for rice farmers, they did not have 'input purchase' related problems. But farmers from other sectors required different inputs which they could not access.

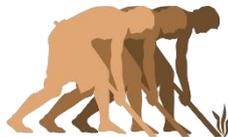


As south west and north west zone are more prone to rice and vegetable farming than other zone, numbers of marketplace and input sellers were higher in these areas. So, farmers could access at least few input sellers.



Input (feed mostly) price increased due to lack of supply, syndicate, lack of availability.

Rice farmers suffered more for lack of access to labor (54%). It was harvesting season where a lot of labor was required for harvesting, threshing and post harvest management.



Problems in access to labor is less because these sectors are not much labor intensive.



Access to Support Services



Due to COVID19 outbreak the farmers faced problems accessing transportation service (64%).



Vegetables farmers faced transportation problem the most as they could not be able to deliver their produce to their targeted marketplaces.

Storage facilities is always very limited to the farmers but this time they felt more necessity for storage facilities than before because the need was acute.



There are many local service providers for veterinary services. So, farmers did not have to face much problem there.



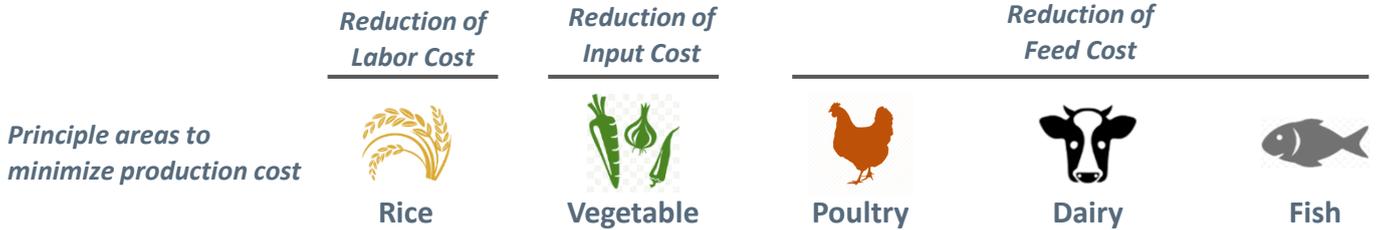


COPING MECHANISM CONSIDERING AGRICULTURAL SERVICE



Production cost Minimization as a Coping mechanism

As the production and sales in every sector were disrupted to survive in the pandemic situation most of the farmers (52%) had to minimize the production cost.



As **south west and north west zone** are more prone to rice and vegetable farming than other zone, numbers of marketplace and input sellers were higher in these areas. So, farmers could access at least few of the services. It seems that, they did not need to minimize the cost as the existing system is well established.

As the data collection was conducted during May 2020 and it was high time for rice harvesting, so rice farmers had already invested their money in the production process. As a part of production cost minimization some farmers adopted self labor as a coping mechanism.



Self labor as a Coping mechanism

Many farmers (54%) adopted self labor or family labor as a coping mechanism to reduce the labor cost.



Mechanization as a Coping mechanism

Based on the availability of the mechanical services, a few farmers (11%) newly adopted mechanization service as coping mechanism.



Labor crisis and high price of labor is an alarming problem in agricultural sector. In **south east zone**, most of the farmers (68%) used self labor or family labor and a few famers (16%) adopted mechanization service due to high labor crisis during the pandemic situation.



COPING MECHANISM CONSIDERING HH SERVICES



Usage of Digital Platform as a Coping Mechanism

During the pandemic situation many farmers (59%) increased the usage of digital platform. As a form of coping mechanism some farmers (28%) increased the use of online transaction platform like Bkash, Rocket and Nogod.

As per our analysis, farmers who increased use of digital platform had less cases of mental frustration. Also they increased the use of online transaction platform which trimmed the frequency of going out of the farmers.

Most used digital platforms:      



Reducing Food consumption as a Coping Mechanism

To adopt with the new reality and survive in long run many farmers (50%) cut down the food intaking as part of coping mechanism.

Like other farmers, vegetable and dairy farmers faced problems selling their agricultural produces, some of the farmers consumed their own produces to reduce and agricultural losses and HH expenditure at the same time.

Major category of cut down food



Fruits and other
vitamin-based foods
(63%)



Animal protein
(98%)



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