

08th-Feb-2016

Climate adapted crops need more focus - The New Nation

By

Staff Reporter :Bangladesh needs to focus more on developing and selecting farming varieties that are adaptive to the country's changing climatic situation, a research carried out by the Centre for Climate Change and Environmental Research (C3ER) revealed this at a seminar on Sunday. Besides, a highly optimized system needs to be put in place so that the climate-efficient varieties and technologies can be reached to the farmers in time, it said. Eminent water resources and environment expert and Professor emeritus of BRAC University Dr Ainun Nishat presented a keynote paper in the light of the research outcome at the seminar styled 'Climate-adaptive technology: Opportunities and challenges' in the city. The Advocacy for Social Change programme of BRAC funded the research carried out in 2015. The government should also ensure that the country's farmers get fair price for their crops. Excavation of canals and ponds is urgent, while the entire irrigation system should be overhauled to optimise the use of water, fuel and power, the research said. Anwar Faruque, director general, seed wing, also additional secretary, Ministry of Agriculture, attended the seminar as the chief guest, while Shykh Seraj, director and head of news, Channel i, was the special guest. Asif Saleh, senior director, strategy, communications and empowerment, BRAC and BRAC International chaired the function while Dr Md Sirajul Islam, programme head, BRAC Agriculture and Food Security, gave the opening speech jointly organised by BRAC Advocacy for Social Change and C3ER. Describing the challenges Bangladesh may have to face in the coming years in agriculture sector, Dr Ainun Nishat said, the country is gradually losing its attribute as 'the land of six seasons' that remained its usual climatic identity for hundreds of years. The spring that used to fill up the space between the winter and summer is gradually disappearing. The late autumn season has become almost non-existing while the monsoon is setting in much later than when it is traditionally expected. The production of Aman rice is the most affected by the climate change impacts right now, subjecting the farmers to repeated loss. This may eventually compel the farmers to move from rice farming towards vegetables and other financially profiting crops, said Dr Nishat. To keep the country's rice production going on the farmers need varieties that are tolerant to these climatic changes. He also observed that the impact of drought has increased in recent years. Describing the scenario of Naogaon, the field of the research, he said, in this district and in some other areas in north Bengal the farmers are producing mango in the field where they previously grew rice. The research also focuses on the management gaps in the existing irrigation system. Anwar Faruque, in his speech, observed that besides developing new crop varieties, fair price for the farmers must also be ensured. To do this coordination among the government, non-governmental actors and private sector need to be strengthened, he said. Media personality Shykh Seraj, in his speech, called on BRAC and other non-governmental actors to strengthen their role in taking information on crops and technologies to the farmer. Programme chair Asif Saleh observed that the marginal farmers in many cases become deprived of opportunities and services, owing to the procedural lingering of government departments and profit-centeredness of private agro-based companies. BRAC, as a development actor, is trying to work in this gap, he said.