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Book Review

A Database On Minor Crops, Cash Crops, Livestock And Fisheries In Bangladesh

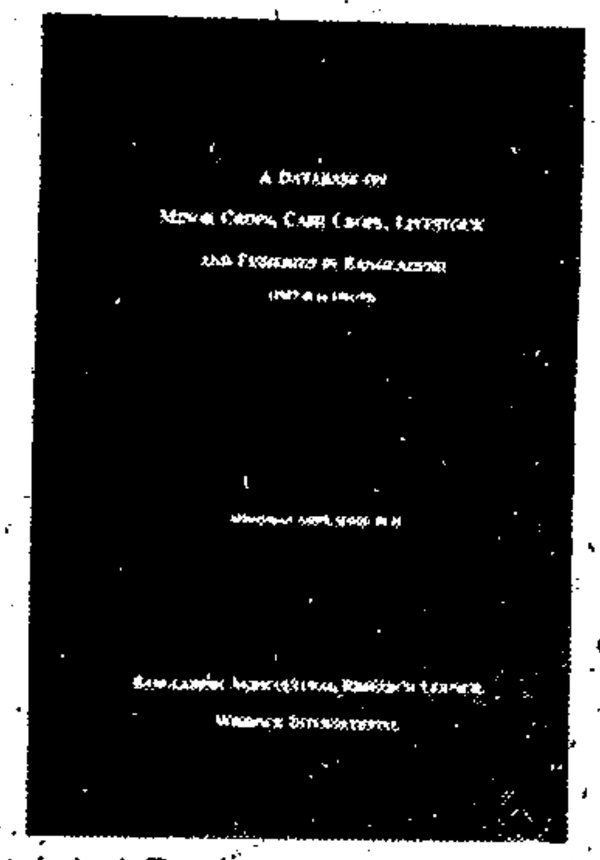
Mohammad Abdul Hamid Ph.D

BANGLADESH has been persistently trying to attain self-sufficiency in foodgrain production as well as in the production of other crops. The government attaches top most priority to agriculture which accounts for about 40 percent of the gross domestic product (GDP). The focus on agriculture is to sustain economic growth and government's explicit goal of achieving self-reliance through integrated rural development programme.

To effectively monitor agricultural development and undertake strategic planning a statistical data base is a must. Masses of unorganized figures in different formats are of little or no value to the researchers and policy makers. They must be assembled systematically and classified. Statistical tables and charts must be organized so that their comparability can be easily understood by researchers and users.

Such a comprehensive and reliable data base is required for analysis, evaluation and continuous refinement of existing agriculture and food policy as well as for considering possible future courses of action. Similarly the efficient operation of specific programme especially for rural areas for production, procurement, price, storage and distribution of the agricultural crops depends upon the availability of a wide range of information.

Such a database was recently published by Bangladesh Agricultural Research Council (BARC) and Human Resoure Development Programme (HRDP) of Winrock International entitled, "A Database on Minor Crops, Cash Crops, Livestock and Fisheries in Bangladesh" by Mohammad Abdul Hamid Ph.D. It is a superb collection and compilation of the longest time series data (more than 45 years) in agriculture sector now available in the country. Prior to this publication Dr. Hamid has published another database entitled "A Database on Agriculture and Foodgrains in Bangladesh." Wide appreciation from scientists and researchers from home and abroad and request for another database for the crops not covered in this publication encouraged him for the second present database.



Data exhibited by area, production, yield by districts and varieties; harvest and homestead price of minor crops, cash crops, pulses, vegetables and others. Data were collected from official sources like Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, Ministry of Food, Ministry of Agriculture, Planning Commission, Directorate of Livestock and Fisheries etc. Intensive editing was done by the author so as to avoid any inconsistency or duplication.

The book has seven chapters, the first chapters deal with general features relating to foodgrain budget in Bangladesh, followed by area, production, yield, price, fisheries and livestock. Data period covers from 1947/48 to 1991/92.

The color of the cover of the book is maroon. The book is printed in two types of quality paper, i.e. in offset and KPM paper. Printing of the data in tabular form in transparencies was done by the author on IBM personal computer and laser printer. The book was printed by Binimoy Printer. In terms of quality of printing and lay out of the tables, it matches the standard set by international publishing houses. For the quality of paper two prices are tagged. Number of pages is around 250.

Congratulations should go to Dr. Mohammad Abdul Hamid again who due to his untiring efforts has collected and complied a vast array of data in computer disks before giving it to the publisher. The book in a nutshell has represented Bangladesh's last 45 years' trends in minor crops, cash crops, pulses, vegetables and oilseeds.

Thanks also go to the publisher who has taken the reisk of publishing such a voluminous work.

The book would be of tremendous use to policy-makers and researchers in their day to days activities. For Macro and Micro analysis for agriculture sector the book would be a gem. No such book has been published by any researchers and publishers till today.

The database is also available incomputer disk available with the author. Data can be retrieved by LOTUS 123 or by such kind of such software.

In order to forecast one has to look backward. The regularities and pattern in historical time series data cannot be ignore. If forecast is based on such regularities and patterns, then it could by revealed that future follows the past with some degree of consistency, that what has happened in the past will to a greater or lesser extent continue to happen again in the future. For this we need a sound computerised data base and the above mentioned data base is the one which can help us.

—A Reviewer.

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