

# Experts: Haor regions need short-duration rice varieties to avoid crop damage in flash flood

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Speakers at a session of the inaugural day of the 4th Annual Gobeshona Conference for Research on Climate Change in Bangladesh (Gobeshona 4), at Independent University, Bangladesh on January 8, 2017. Mahmud Hossain Opu/Dhaka Tribune

'Around 14% of the total paddy production in Bangladesh is produced in Haor and if the rice supply is ensured and yield in this area is increased, this would mitigate the impacts of climate change not just to food producers but also to consumers through price stability of rice.'

Cold-tolerant and short-duration rice varieties need to be developed for the farmers in Haor regions in the country so that they can harvest the crop before the onset of flash floods reducing the risk of losses, experts and researchers opined on Monday.

A number of local and international agricultural researchers came up with the remarks at the fourth annual conference on climate change research in Bangladesh, titled “Gobeshona,” held at Independent University Bangladesh (IUB) in Dhaka.

They researchers said BRRI dhan28 and BRRI dhan 29, the two high yielding varieties (HYVs) that are cultivated in around 90% of the arable lands in the Haor regions, are not ideal for the Haor areas as they were susceptible to damage during the cold spells around February-March (low night temperatures) the risk of damage from flash floods on account of their long duration.

The researchers have proposed two different strategies — to develop short growth duration (120-135 days) cold-tolerant rice varieties maintaining the current crop calendar of the farmers, and to develop medium-duration (135-145 days) cold-tolerant varieties seeding at least 15 days earlier than the existing common practice.

“In both cases, crop could be harvested before the onset of flash flood (within March) and due to cold-tolerant ability (at reproductive stage) no sterility-related problems will occur,” said Dr Mohammad Rafiqul Islam, a scientist (Plant Breeder) at International Rice Research Institute (IRRI).

In recent years, the Haor areas have experienced major flash floods in the first week of April which had led to the complete inundation of matured rice just before the harvest.

“This flood has caused huge losses to the farmers and threatens the food security and livelihood of the people living in these areas in particular and in Bangladesh in general,” Dr Rafiqul’s study said.

The study titled “Improving livelihood by promoting rice-based technologies in Haor areas of Bangladesh” said last year in April 2017, flash flood resulted in more than 0.3 million hectares areas being inundated at maturity, flowering or dough stage of rice, causing paddy production loss of more than 1.5 million tons.

“Around 14% of the total paddy production in Bangladesh is produced in Haor and if the rice supply is ensured and yield in this area is increased, this would mitigate the impacts of climate change not just to food producers but also to consumers through price stability of rice,” the study added.

Dr Humnath Bhandari, the interim IRRI representative for Bangladesh said the flash floods have been occurring before the usual time as a result of climate change in the country while premeasured efforts would help to reduce the risk for farmers in Haor regions.

The experts also stressed the need for mechanization in agricultural sector, especially in the Haor regions so that the farmers can harvest within a short time with the help of digital technologies and machinery support soon after the crops are mature.

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