



The Status of Commercialized Bt Brinjal in Bangladesh

By Bhagirath Choudhary, K.M. Nasiruddin & Kadambini Gaur

TOP TEN FACTS about Bt Brinjal in Bangladesh

Fact # 1. 2014 was the first year of successful commercialization of Bt brinjal in Bangladesh. In a historic decision, on 30 October 2013, Bangladesh approved the official release of four genetically modified, varieties of insect resistant Bt brinjal for seed production and initial commercialization.

Fact # 2. For the first time in 2014, Bangladeshi farmers planted Bt brinjal over 2 hectares in early 2014. Bangladeshi farmers were the first to plant Bt brinjal over 2 hectares in four representative regions of Gazipur, Jamalpur, Pabna and Rangpur. Approximately 150,000 very small poor farmers grow brinjal on about 50,000 hectares primarily in both the summer and winter seasons.

Fact # 3. Number of farmers growing Bt brinjal in 2014. The seedlings of four Bt brinjal varieties were distributed by Hon'ble Minister of Agriculture, Ms. Matia Chowdhury, to 20 small brinjal farmers on 22 January 2014, who became the first to plant Bt brinjal on 2 hectares in early 2014 in spring season in Bangladesh.

Fact # 4. Four Bt brinjal varieties approved for planting in six regions. BARI Bt Brinjal-1 variety popularly known as Uttara was planted in Rajshahi region; BARI Bt Brinjal-2 (Kajla) in Barisal region; BARI Bt Brinjal-3 (Nayantara) in Rangpur and Dhaka regions; and BARI Bt Brinjal-4 variety (Ishurdi/ISD006) was planted in Pabna and Chittagong regions of Bangladesh.

Fact # 5. On farm performance of Bt brinjal. Bt brinjal effectively controlled the infestation of the fruit and shoot borer (FSB) and showed excellent control against shoot damage and fruit damage in all 20 farmers' fields. Farmers did not spray once on Bt brinjal whereas the surrounding non Bt brinjal plots were sprayed on an average twice a week.

Fact # 6. Bountiful Harvest of Bt Brinjal. Majority of 20 farmers harvested bountiful of brinjal irrespective of the off-season planting of the crop in spring season of 2014. Farmers made several fruit pickings and marketed blemish-free brinjal fruits as "BARI Bt Begun #, no pesticide used" in the local market of Bangladesh.

Fact # 7. Savings due to Bt brinjal. Bt brinjal helped save Bangladeshi Taka 10,000 on pesticide spraying for controlling FSB, earned income in the range of Taka 75000-80000 and resulted in the net benefit of Taka 50000-60000 equivalent of US\$650-750 per bigha.

Fact # 8. Benefits of Bt brinjal. Bt brinjal improved marketable yield by at least 30% and reduced the number of insecticide applications by a massive 70-90% resulting in a net economic benefit of US\$1,868 per hectare.

Fact # 9. Socio-economic contribution of Bt brinjal. At the national level, Bt brinjal is estimated to have the capacity to generate a net additional economic benefit of US\$200 million per year for around 150,000 small brinjal farmers in Bangladesh.

Fact # 10. Future prospects. The adoption of Bt brinjal will increase substantially in the forthcoming summer and winter seasons of 2014. Five additional popular Bt brinjal varieties including Dohazari, Shingnath, Chaga, Islampuri and Khatkatia will be introduced in the near future. The government of Bangladesh plans to bring 20,000 hectares or approx. 40% of total 50,000 hectares across 20 districts under nine Bt brinjal varieties in the next five years.