

# **SRI NATIONAL NETWORK BANGLADESH**

## **Update of SRI Progress IN Bangladesh (April 2015)**

### **1. Introduction**

The System of Rice Intensification, known as SRI method, is gaining popularity among rice farmers in many areas of Bangladesh in recent times for its potential to improve productivity of land, labour, irrigation water and other inputs simultaneously. SRI not only increases rice yield, but also helps save our environment. This system was originated and developed in Madagascar in the 1980s, and since 1999 its validity has so far been seen in more than 55 countries across the world, providing farmers with increased income and food security. The SRI method follows a set of principles that are at times radically different from the traditional ways of growing rice.

SRI involves transplanting single, young seedlings, removed from an upland (garden-like) nursery with care and re-established quickly into the field, instead of the conventional method of transplanting multiple seedlings, 30-50 days old, in clumps, pulled up from flooded nurseries and often treating the roots roughly, knocking off soil and exposing them to the air and sun. SRI spaces rice plants more widely, reducing plant populations dramatically, and does not depend on continuous flooding of rice fields. It uses less seed, less chemical fertilizer and inputs, and promotes soil biotic activities in and around plant roots, enhanced through liberal applications of compost and through weeding with a rotating weeder that aerates the soil. These changed practices with lower inputs counter-intuitively lead to improved productivity with yields of 7-8 tons/ hectare, about double the present world average of 3.8 t/ha.

Rice is the main food crop in Bangladesh, occupying 75% of the cropped area. Under the circumstances stated above, the country needs a sustainable system of rice production that gives higher yields with lower costs. We need a crop management system that can reduce dependence on high-cost modern inputs, improving soil quality, and being environment-friendly. SRI has demonstrated potentials in Bangladesh that meet these requirements. In recent evaluations, it has given 25-50% higher yield, and sometimes even more, with fewer requirements of water, fertilizer and agrochemicals, and 50-100% greater profitability because of higher yield and lower costs.

### **2. A Review of SRI Activities and Progress in Bangladesh**

In 1999-2000, the government's Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE) and CARE-Bangladesh introduced SRI to farmers with whom they were working in Kishoregonj district. The average SRI yields in that first *Boro* season were 6.5-7.5 t/ha. At the same time, a Bangladesh Rice Research Institute (BRRI) researcher at its Comilla research station who received a paper on SRI tried it on-station and found that a yield increase of 1 t/ha could be attributed solely to the change in methods. Since rice yield increases had been stagnant for some years, and BRRI was under some pressure to raise yields, this attracted some attention, although most researchers continued to be very sceptical.

In December 2000, Prof. Norman Uphoff, who was in Bangladesh for other CIIFAD business, visited Kishoregonj and gave seminars on SRI for CARE-Bangladesh, BRRI at its Gazipur headquarters, and BRAC office in Dhaka. These institutions, plus the DAE, became the core institutions involved with SRI in Bangladesh. BRAC also began doing its own evaluations of SRI.

In January 2002, a meeting of organisations interested in SRI was hosted by BRAC at its headquarters. They formed a Steering Committee composed of BIRRI, DAE, BRAC, CARE, and Syngenta Bangladesh Ltd. which had also started trials on SRI methods and found them beneficial, particularly for seed multiplication. This brought together public sector, NGO and private sector institutions.

In September 2002, a workshop was organized by CARE-Bangladesh on behalf of the national working group, convened at the Bangladesh Agricultural University (BAU) at Mymensingh. At a follow-up steering committee meeting, plans were made for systematic, two-year evaluation of SRI, which could be funded by the PETRRA project managed by IRRI/Bangladesh and financed by DFID. These studies have provided a thorough base of knowledge for understanding the advantages that SRI methods can provide.

**SRI trials under PETRRA sub-project:** During 2002-03 and 2003-04 *Boro* seasons, PETRRA/ IRRI provided funding support to carry out action-research trials in several areas of the country with the participation of some selected NGOs and BIRRI researchers. The overall results were positive, and farmers achieved substantially higher yields under SRI practice except in case of BIRRI trials in Comilla. The BIRRI-Satkhira results showed SRI results to be better than both farmers' and BIRRI methods, but BIRRI-Comilla did not find much encouraging results. It was unfortunate that on-station BIRRI results were not encouraging. Except for BIRRI-Comilla, the BIRRI-Satkhira and all other evaluating organizations including NGOs, Syngenta and DAE got higher yields in farmers' field with SRI methods. It has been learned that farmers in the Satkhira region, where the successful trials were conducted by a BIRRI scientist in collaboration with a local NGO *Uttaran*, are still following SRI methods on their own initiative. Likewise, in other areas where initial trials were conducted, many farmers have adapted SRI methods under their own initiative. DAE also introduced SRI under the name of *Ekchara paddhoti* (single seedling method) in selected areas.

**First national workshop on SRI:** The first national workshop on SRI was held in December 2003 in Dhaka. The inaugural session was chaired by the Executive Chairman of Bangladesh Agricultural Research Council (BARC), Dr M. Nurul Alam. The then State Minister for Agriculture, Mr. Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir, MP, attended as Chief Guest. Seven papers were presented by researchers, extension specialists, and NGO officials. SRI farmers also narrated their experience. The workshop felt that a better understanding of the principles of SRI would be necessary to promote SRI methods in the country, and it was recommended, among other things, that an integrated and coordinated approach be followed involving farmers, researchers and extension workers (GO/NGO) in conducting SRI trials. It also recommended seeking donor assistance in undertaking SRI promotional activities.

**Second national SRI workshop:** Though SRI was found to have continued with farmers' initiative in different locations, there was no coordinated central organization to effectively play roles of extension, training and motivation to disseminate its benefits throughout the country. A second national workshop on SRI was held on February 22, 2005 in the DAE Conference Room, Khamarbari, Dhaka, attended by the Minister of Agriculture and with significant farmer participation.

Institutional support for SRI was further revived in Bangladesh in a meeting held on 15<sup>th</sup> July 2005, with SRI Steering Committee representatives and Oxfam GB Bangladesh. It was decided to carry out action-research trials on the potentials of SRI through partner NGOs in the country. It was agreed that Prof. Muazzam Husain, Convenor, SRI Steering Committee, would lead a team to facilitate the implementation, initially on a pilot scale in some Oxfam GB River Basin Project (RBP) areas during the *Boro* season (2005-06).

**Third and Fourth national workshops:** The third and fourth National Workshops on SRI were sponsored by Oxfam GB Bangladesh and were held in October 2006 and February 2008, respectively. In both these workshops, recommendations were made to proceed with the promotion of SRI in Bangladesh with GO-NGO collaboration.

**Results of Oxfam GB Bangladesh-supported SRI trials:** Oxfam through its River Basin Programme (RBP) had initiated SRI trials with the *char* dwellers in the northern part of the country during 2005-06 *Boro* season and continued for three consecutive *Boro* seasons. Each year, the results of the trials were encouraging as reflected by an increase in both area and farmer participation. Trials were also conducted during the fourth year with support from *Padakhep*, a partner NGO of Oxfam GB.

SRI NNB provided training, monitoring and reporting support to the personnel of partner NGOs of Oxfam GB Bangladesh. SRI cultivation guidelines (manual) and brochures have been printed adequately for distribution to the various organisations and farming communities.

**Impact of RBP at Farmers' level:**

- SRI method of rice cultivation created an awareness and interest among the farmers especially in the *char* and *haor* areas of Kurigram, Gaibandha, Jamalpur, Sariatpur and Kishoregonj districts. The farmers of these areas experimented with SRI and received better results.
- The positive results of SRI attracted many neighbouring farmers to adopt SRI method of rice cultivation. Many farmers found utility in its reduction of seed needs by more than 60%, increased production, and less pest/ disease infestation.
- SRI practice has been gaining popularity with various farmers associations such as *Grameen Unnoyan Samitee* (GUS) in Netrokona and BARD (Bangladesh Action for Rural Development) in Kushtia, and some others.

➤ **Fifth national SRI workshop:** On 28 April 2010, the fifth experience-sharing national workshop on SRI was held at the Bangladesh Rice Research Institute (BRRI). The Honourable Minister for Agriculture, Begum Matia Chowdhury, was the Chief Guest, and Dr. Wais Kabir, Executive Chairman of the Bangladesh Agricultural Research Council, chaired the workshop sessions. Policy makers, scientists, extension personnel, and representatives from various national and international organisations participated. Papers presented and discussions testified to the potentiality and success of SRI method in the country. The workshop recommended an integrated and coordinated programme approach by government (research and extension) and non-governmental organisations (national and international) for promotion of SRI in a planned manner. The SRI NNB would play a coordinating role in this respect.

### **3. Institutional Framework for SRI Promotion in Bangladesh**

SRI initiative in Bangladesh is now coordinated by an institutional body named SRI National Network Bangladesh (SRI NNB). This has succeeded the former SRI Steering Committee. This association has an executive committee with membership from Government institutions like the BRRI, DAE, and the Rural Development Academy (RDA); the Bangladesh Rice Foundation; development organisations like BRAC, ActionAid, and SAFE; and individuals actively interested in SRI. Prof. Muazzam Husain has been serving as Coordinator for SRI NNB. The Secretariat for SRI work has been set up at Bangladesh Rice Foundation (BRF),

which has been playing an advocacy and supporting role to institutionalise SRI with DAE and Government.

**Progress at institutional and policy levels:** There has been progress at the institutional level to understand and take forward SRI initiatives with the Government and NGOs. Top-level officials of the Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE) are now supportive to promote SRI among the farmers throughout the country. For instance, in the 4<sup>th</sup> National Workshop held on February 13, 2008 at BARC, Dhaka, the then Honourable Adviser, Ministry of Agriculture and Ministry of Water Resources, Dr. C. S. Karim, was the Chief Guest, and the then Secretary of Agriculture, Mr. M. Abdul Aziz ndc, was Chairman. The workshop came up with some specific recommendations, which are considered favourable for SRI promotion in the country.

- i. The valuable discussions in the workshop provided a guideline to move forward to improve our rice production system. Since SRI has shown advantages in ensuring higher production and distinct cost economies, we need to show its suitability to our farmers in Bangladesh
- ii. GO-NGO collaboration should be strengthened to promote SRI in a right manner. We must all help farmers' organisations to adopt SRI in an appropriate way
- iii. The BRRI should have an open mind and do more research on SRI to make recommendations to our extension workers and farmers to adapt the system in an appropriate manner. Research is needed to devise ways and means to overcome the constraints and bottlenecks of SRI in the country under its own agro-ecological and socio-economic conditions.
- iv. Necessary technical support should be provided by the Government through the DAE to expedite the promotion of SRI
- v. Training of farmers and field workers on the SRI method should be provided in a planned manner by the DAE in collaboration with SRI NNB, which would enable them to properly understand and apply the SRI principles in the farmers' field

After the workshop, MoA issued a memorandum to DAE for implementing SRI with field demonstrations. But no fund allocation was made in this respect for implementing this by the DAE personnel. As a new initiative, it would cost some money for training of DAE trainers/field staff, training of farmers, demonstration setups, organizing farmer field days, etc. However, DAE top officials showed their interest to promote SRI in farmers' field. In this regard, six Upazilas from four districts were selected for setting SRI demonstrations. Twenty-five Sub-Assistant Agricultural Officers (SAAO) from these six Upazilas, and another 20 higher-level DAE and CERDI officers were trained in two separate batches in June 2008 at CERDI campus, Gazipur. The training was conducted by SRI NNB, which also shared the major part of the cost from its limited funds. It would not be possible for the SRI NNB to conduct any further training programmes without financial support from some institution.

BRRI was also instructed by an official memo from MoA to undertake necessary research on SRI so that the existing problems can be overcome at the farmers' level. This would help to expedite promotion of SRI among farmers. In the meantime, one Senior Scientific Officer (SSO) of BRRI set up experimental plots on SRI at BRRI, as part of his Ph.D. programme. Field research continued for three years, ending during the 2009-10 *Boro* season. Preliminary results appeared to be highly encouraging. The dissertation has been recently completed.

Also at the Bangladesh Agricultural University (BAU), one Professor of Agronomy started experiments on SRI and came up with highly encouraging results. Students have been conducting research at M.S. and Ph.D. levels on SRI, and BAU has been planning to continue its on-farm SRI trials, though on a small scale due to lack of funds.

**SRI trials by partner organisations:** It is gratifying to note that DAE and various other development organisations have shown interest to collaborate with the SRI NNB and provide support for the promotion of SRI in Bangladesh. For example, Padakhep, a national development NGO and BRAC have started adopting the SRI method from the *Boro* season (2010-11). DAE has established demonstration plots at farmer level in six upazila under Kushtia district during the *Aus* season, 2011. In addition, one enthusiastic SRI promoter, Mr. Hashem Zaman, also started using the SRI method in rice production in Naogaon district in northern Bangladesh. He conducted SRI trials during the 2009-10 *Boro* season in 3.3 acres of land, while during the 2010-11 *Boro* season SRI method was used for producing both aromatic varieties and BRRI *dhan* – 29 in 33.3 acres. SRI NNB provided training to the Extension staffs of the BRAC programme and to extension staff and some farmers of the DAE programme. During the 2011-12 *Boro* season, Proshika, a national NGO also conducted demonstrations on SRI in three districts.

**Padakhep initiates SRI method in seed production:** Padakhep, a national development NGO adopted the SRI method in 45 acres of its rice seed production areas since the *Boro* season (2010-11) in Dinajpur district. As a partner organisation of Oxfam GB, Bangladesh, some Padakhep staffs had gained wide experience in implementing and managing the SRI method. The Padakhep top management also has favourable attitude towards SRI.

**BRAC Share Croppers' Development Programme conducted SRI demonstration:** During the 2010-11 *Boro* season BRAC set up SRI demonstration plots in eight *Upazila* (Sub-districts) of eight districts under its Sharecropper Development Programme. Out of ten areas selected two areas had to be abandoned due to severe cold injury to young seedlings. The average grain yield was 7.48 t/ha under SRI method and 6.13 t/ha under normal practice. BRAC leadership is also considered to be favourable to the SRI method and can play a very valuable role in promoting SRI in Bangladesh. It continued SRI demonstrations on a limited scale during the *Boro* season 2011-12 also. From the *Boro* season of 2012-13, BRAC has initiated a regular SRI promotion programme on a fairly large-scale in a number of districts. This is going on under the new SRI NNB collaborative programme.

**DAE undertakes SRI demonstration during Aus season, 2011 in Kushtia:** During a discussion session with the Director General, DAE, the matter of initiating demonstration of SRI method by DAE in different suitable areas was raised by the Coordinator, SRI NNB. The DG proposed to start SRI demonstration immediately during the *Aus* season in Kushtia and asked the Deputy Director, DAE, Kushtia to arrange the same in consultation with the SRI NNB. The DD was very enthusiastic about the proposal and a training session and field visit was arranged. A two member team went to Kushtia and conducted SRI training to 27 field staff (SAAO) and 13 farmers. Field visits were also made to discuss different aspects of SRI, motivate interested farmers, and advice on the suitability of selected plots. Finally demonstration plots were started in six upazila with five farmers' plots in each upazila. Progress was monitored. The DD informed that the performance of the trials was good. However, he has been transferred to Ishwardi as Principal of the Agricultural Extension Training Institute (AETI) there. He promised to continue his support to promote SRI.

**Proshika conducts SRI trials:** Proshika, which earned reputation for its initiative in organic farming, conducted demonstration trials on SRI in three districts, Manikgonj, Naogaon, and Rangpur during the 2011-12 *Boro* season. The results were encouraging except in Rangpur where transplantation was made very late in the season.

#### **4. Plans for expansion of SRI activities by the SRI NNB**

It is planned to develop collaborative programmes with both governmental and non-governmental organisations for the promotion of SRI as a method of environment-friendly sustainable rice production in the country, and to help improve food security in the country.

The activities would include research, extension and motivational programmes. Some aspects of the programme deserving immediate action include the following:

**Wider dissemination of the principles of SRI:** Extensive media coverage may be obtained for this purpose along with associated promotional measures.

**Training on SRI:** SRI NNB will provide training to DAE and other organization personnel interested in SRI learning and promotion among the farming community. One limitation of the SRI NNB is that it has resource persons but no financial capacity to do this. Decision has been made recently to prepare a coordinated SRI development programme and seek financial and institutional credit support for farmer level replication of SRI and in conducting training, monitoring and evaluation, and research programmes of SRI NNB.

**Learning video on SRI:** With financial support from ADRA Bangladesh, the SRI NNB dubbed one SRI video prepared in Indonesia for free distribution among organisations/individuals interested in practising SRI methods. Since the agro-ecological conditions in Bangladesh differ from those of Indonesia, it is felt necessary to develop a video on SRI in the country for better learning and encouraging farmers.

**Field visit, monitoring and evaluations:** SRI NNB plans to make field visits to observe and monitor the SRI activities being implemented in DAE, NGOs, and other organizations. Evaluation reports are also to be prepared, especially to overcome any constraints for SRI adaptation.

**Strengthening action research:** Field evaluation reports would form the basis of action research. This would involve strengthening the research activities in collaboration with various organisations. In addition to the BAU and BIRRI, research support from other Agricultural Universities would also be sought.

**Support for SRI NNB:** The SRI needs assistance and support for effectively conducting its functions. Assistance was provided by Prof. Norman Uphoff from CIIFAD in 2007 to the SRI NNB, which was spent for SRI promotional activities and overhead costs during a period of three years (2007-10). In addition, Oxfam GB, Bangladesh provided funds for implementing the SRI trials in its River Basin Project areas for three years (2005-08) and for holding Experience Sharing National Workshops during that period. The 2010 National SRI Workshop was co-sponsored by the BIRRI and *Padakhep*.

With expanding scope of work, the SRI National Network, Bangladesh (SRI NNB) also felt that its infrastructural facilities were needed to be expanded to improve its capacity to perform its functions effectively. Institutional support including grant of funds would be required for the purpose of implementing the different SRI promotional programmes. An informally federated and coordinated organisational structure was envisaged. In this connection, as a follow-up of the EC meeting of the SRI NNB held on 12 April, 2012, discussions with partner organizations were held and a Programme Committee was formed to chalk out development plans and programmes for strengthening SRI NNB and help in seeking effective institutional support from different potential sources. A draft proposal was prepared to be finalised after consultations with the partner organisations.

It was stipulated in the new proposal for SRI promotion that the partner organisations would contribute necessary funds to carry out their own part on the coordinated programme. Funds would also be sought from donors and other fund providing institutions especially to conduct action research, monitoring, evaluation and reporting, and other promotional activities to be coordinated by the SRI NNB.

## 5. Recent Developments in SRI Promotion in Bangladesh

**Dialogue on SRI:** A National Dialogue on 'Evaluation of the System of Rice Intensification' was organized by BRAC and Bangladesh Rice Foundation (BRF) at BRAC Centre on 17 October 2012 to review and evaluate the SRI trials and promotional activities in Bangladesh, find out impediments faced in scaling up promotion of SRI, and provide recommendations for promoting SRI in a planned and co-ordinated manner.

Dr. Mahabub Hossain, Executive Director of BRAC chaired the session and Dr. Wais Kabir, Executive Chairman, Bangladesh Agricultural Research Council (BARC), was the Chief Guest. Kb. Mukul Chandra Roy, the then Director (Field Service Wing), DAE and subsequently DG, DAE) and Dr. M. Shamsheer Ali, Director (Research) BIRRI were special guests.

### **Recommendations of the Dialogue:**

1. The dialogue recommended an integrated and coordinated programme approach by the government (research and extension) and non-government organizations for promotion of SRI in Bangladesh. Collaboration among the government and non-government agencies should be strengthened to promote SRI.
2. It recommended an action plan for identifying areas most suitable for SRI in Bangladesh and promoting SRI in those areas in a planned manner as all areas of Bangladesh is not suitable for SRI.
3. Discussants also recommended the extension workers and practitioners to go to the farmers for gathering their feedback on practical problems related to extension of SRI to solve the problems in accordance with farmers' recommendations instead of depending solely on conducting more research.
4. The dialogue recommended identifying an agreed and modified features of SRI components particularly on the age of seedling, spacing, using organic matter and water management in line with Bangladesh environment.
5. It was recommended to conduct more research for identifying impediments related to transplantation of young seedlings during winter cold waves and finding out combination of SRI components for different agro-ecological zones in Bangladesh.
6. The dialogue recommended reducing crop growth duration by evolving new short duration varieties for more crop intensification.
7. In areas where it is not possible to adopt all components of SRI, adoption of SRI components may be modified for applying those suitable under the given agro-ecological condition of each area.
8. A block or community approach is strongly suggested for more efficient and effective irrigation management under the SRI method. In this respect proper coordination between farmers and tube well owners need to be done. The dialogue also called for necessary policy changes in water rates, and other measures that would facilitate the execution of the block or community approach.
9. In activating the integrated and co-ordinated SRI action plan, attempts should also be made to raise necessary funds, especially to effectively carry out the co-ordinating functions of the SRI action plan by the SRI NNB, working under the umbrella of the BRF. (It may be mentioned here that the SRI NNB Executive Committee is represented by DAE, BIRRI, BAU, BRF, BRAC, RDA, and other

partner NGOs working on SRI.) The government should provide funds for conducting trials in farmers' fields in order to promote SRI.

10. It was also recommended that for promoting SRI in Bangladesh in a coordinated manner, BARC and KGF would be requested to provide funds, especially for conducting action-research for removing various constraints in large-scale adoption of SRI.

**Follow-up Meeting:** A follow-up meeting on SRI, after the National Dialogue held on 17 October 2012, was held at the BARC Conference Room on 19 November 2012 chaired by Dr. Wais Kabir, Executive Chairman, BARC. Representatives from different SRI partner organizations were present. Among those present were Dr. Mahabub Hossain, ED, BRAC, Mr. M. A. Matin, DG, RDA, Mr. Mukul Ch. Roy, DG, DAE and Prof. Najrul Islam, Professor, BAU. Some members of SRI NNB, and field level officials of DAE also participated in the discussions.

The meeting discussed and confirmed the proceedings of the National Dialogue on SRI held on 17 October 2012. Representatives from different partner organizations expressed support to the recommendations of the dialogue. They expressed their intention to go ahead with strengthening their efforts in SRI promotion. The meeting also discussed various aspects related to the implementation of the SRI promotional programmes by different partner organizations of SRI NNB, including their mode of operation and funding. It was decided that the partner organisations would undertake their own part of the SRI promotional programme, and strive to contribute necessary funds for the same. Another recommendation of the meeting was to seek funds from BARC/KGF.

**Ongoing SRI activities:** The EC meeting of SRI NNB, held on 08 December 2012, formed a sub-committee to prepare a proposal for seeking funds from the KGF. Unfortunately, due to various reasons, the proposal could not be prepared in time. No fund could be procured so far, especially to conduct action research, monitoring, evaluation and reporting, and other promotional activities to be coordinated by the SRI NNB. We would have to seek funds from any donor organization, whenever an opportunity arrives. The EC meeting held on 11 May 2013, among other things, expressed its satisfaction at the initiation of a new programme on SRI promotion under its Agriculture and Food Security programme in five northern districts. Reports from other partners were not received. The RDA reported later that it had also started action programme on SRI during the 2012-13 Boro season, and that they would try SRI during all three production seasons, i.e., *Boro*, *Aus (Kharif 1)* and *Aman (Kharif 2)*. BAU has also been conducting some action-research on a small-scale. Their activities are briefly reported below.

**BRAC SRI programme:** Under its Agriculture and Food Security Programme, BRAC initiated a validation and dissemination of SRI methods for sustainable rice production through active participation of farmers during the 2012-13 *Boro* season. A block approach was followed to facilitate irrigation under the AWD system and strengthen participatory group action. The programme has been continuing during the last three years. The following table shows the number of districts covered, Upazilas/blocks, number of participating farmers, and acreage under SRI during the last three *Boro* seasons.

Table 1: Progress of BRAC SRI programme 2012-13 to 2014-15

Year	Districts	Upazilas/blocks	No. Of farmers	SRI acreage
2012-13	5	15/15	1105	441.09
2013-14	11	31	2830	1335.21
2014-15	8	27/52	2758	1513.94

The above table shows that number of SRI production blocks, number of participating farmers, and acreage increased during the last three years. Only the first year's report has been received, which indicates that performance of SRI was much better than that under farmers' practice. SRI yield was 50% higher and profitability was almost double for both hybrid and inbred rice cultivation.

**RDA programme:** Experiments were conducted at RDA demonstration farm and at farmers' fields of 15 selected farmers during all three rice production seasons during 2012-13. Findings on comparative performance showed that during all seasons, performance of SRI was better than that of farmers' practice. Both yields and returns of SRI were higher during all three seasons. It is gratifying to know that RDA is the only organization which has been working on SRI during all three seasons.

A piece of good news just received is that the Government has approved a five year project to be implemented by RDA. The title of the project is "Action research project on extension and dissemination of modern water saving technologies and management practices to increase crop production". The objectives of the project include introduction of modern farming technologies in 200 sites in 40 districts for increasing rice and other crops, to increase irrigation water use efficiency, and improve the soil fertility through utilization of *trichoderma* enhanced composting. This is hoped to be a good opportunity for promoting SRI methods of rice production management by RDA among other methods. There is also a scope for including crops other than rice in the project.

**BAU SRI Research:** Prof. Najrul Islam, professor of Agronomy, reported that due to lack of funds, he could not undertake any large programme on SRI research. However, he has now three graduate students doing dissertation on SRI methods in an one acre experimental plot during the last *Aman (Kharif 2)* season (2014), using a raised bed method of planting and a new variety of rice developed by BAU. Comparative performance between SRI and farmer's practice showed that yields under SRI and farmer's method were 6.5 tons/ha and 5.00 tons/ha respectively.

The potentiality of SRI is now being increasingly realized in Bangladesh. But it took a fairly long time to reach this stage since its inception in 1999-2000. Now many farmers realize that by applying the SRI principles they can receive higher yields, reduce water requirements and enhance their income. However, widespread understanding of the underlying science behind the SRI principles is a prerequisite for its large-scale dissemination. This involves undertaking of further on-station and farmers' field research, and conducting a planned and organized extension process. Only then we can realize the real benefits of SRI in promoting food security and reduction of poverty in Bangladesh.

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