

Accelerating Vegetable Productivity Improvement (AVPI)

MONTHLY REPORT | MAY 2018



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Acronyms and Abbreviations

AVPI	Accelerating Vegetable Productivity Improvement
BMO	Briquetting Machine Owner
DAE	Department of Agricultural Extension
DMO	District Marketing Officer
FDP	Fertilizer Deep Placement
FMO	Field Monitoring Officer
FTF	Feed the Future
GAP	Good Agricultural Practice
GHG	Greenhouse Gas
IFDC	International Fertilizer Development Center
kg	kilogram
mt	metric ton
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NPK	Nitrogen, Phosphorus, and Potassium
SAAO	Sub-Assistant Agriculture Officer
SWOT	Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats

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Highlights

Introduction

The Accelerating Vegetable Productivity Improvement (AVPI) project is the second partnership between the Walmart Foundation and the International Fertilizer Development Center (IFDC) to improve the livelihoods of low-income female vegetable and fruit farmers in Bangladesh.

The project targets the horticulture subsector (vegetables and fruits), which is particularly relevant to women farmers. The project is expected to reach an estimated 37,892 beneficiaries.¹ This report contains a monthly update covering project activities in May 2018.

Results

- **Information on Vegetable and Fruit Market Knowledge:** AVPI completed an analysis on vegetable and fruit market knowledge of its women beneficiaries, which was captured through a winter 2017-18 trained sample farmer survey of 2,990 beneficiaries from 225 survey villages. The farmers were interviewed to provide information on five parameters related to marketing: (1) knowledge of market location; (2) awareness of crop demand; (3) awareness of supply situation; (4) knowledge of timing of premium price; and (5) knowledge of consumer preference on product quality. Table 1 shows the results of the analyzed data as a percentage of respondents compared with baseline data.² The table reveals that the AVPI direct beneficiaries' knowledge of marketing has increased considerably in all five parameters.

¹ AVPI conducted a census during winter 2016-17 to determine the current agriculture status of all 28,360 women farmers who were trained during the IFDC-Walmart activity 2013-15 period in the Feed the Future (FTF) zone. A total of 21,892 farmers were found active in winter 2016-17. AVPI will train another 16,000 women horticulture farmers in 400 batches throughout the life of the project. Therefore, the number of expected beneficiaries will be $21,892 + 16,000 = 37,892$.

² "Study on Vegetable and Fruit Marketing Information" conducted by an independent consultant for the IFDC-AVPI project in January 2017.

Table 1. Information on Market Knowledge

Item	Baseline January 2017	Current Knowledge April 2018
Know Market Locations	68	89
Aware of Crop Demand	3	20
Aware of Supply Situation	5	18
Know Timing of Premium Price	3	13
Know Consumer Preferences	11	22

AVPI organizes vegetable and fruit marketing seminars and farmer training programs to improve the knowledge of its women beneficiaries on market information, including crop demand, supplies, and post-harvest practices for better income from their crop sales. The AVPI project activities to improve the marketing knowledge of beneficiaries are clearly making a positive impact on women's empowerment. AVPI women vegetable and fruit farmers are now playing leadership roles in their communities

- **Area Coverage under Good Agricultural Practices (GAPs), including Fertilizer Deep Placement (FDP) Technology, in Summer 2018:** Summer season vegetable cultivation began in February. The women horticulture farmers have been applying GAPs, including FDP, in summer 2018 horticultural crops in the AVPI project locations. A total of about 3,056 hectares of summer 2018 vegetable and fruit area has been brought under FDP technology through May 2018. The project staff are continuously motivating and assisting the fertilizer briquetting machine owners (BMOs) in proper maintenance of their machines and to increase their production, so that all farmers who are interested in using FDP technology can access the product near their farms. Information on all GAPs, including FDP, will be captured through an AVPI cluster village monitoring survey and a trained sample household survey once the fertilizer applications are completed for the 2018 summer vegetable season.
- **FDP Briquette Production:** Information is being collected on *Guti* (briquette) fertilizer production from 233 AVPI villages. In the reporting month, 248.40 metric tons (mt) of *Guti* urea was produced. In addition, 20.50 mt of nitrogen, phosphorus, and potassium (NPK) *Guti* was also produced. In total, 268.90 mt of *Guti* fertilizer was produced during May 2018. The overall production of *Guti* fertilizers in AVPI villages during the summer 2018 vegetable and fruit season was 1,262.70 mt as of the reporting month.

Shapna Mondal: Portrait of a Successful Female Entrepreneur

Shapna Mondal, popularly known as *Guti Boudi* (*Guti* sister-in-law) among her neighbors, is a female BMO based in Madra village of Nesarabad upazila under Pirojpur district in Southern Bangladesh. Shapna, 35, is married to Tapan Mondal, an agro-input retailer who sells crop seeds, fertilizers, and pesticides in his shop. After their marriage, Shapna started to help her husband in his business, which was not running smoothly at the time. With their low income and need to feed a family of five, maintaining a decent livelihood was tough. Shapna and Tapan have two sons and one daughter. Their eldest son is studying at Patuakhali Polytechnic Institute, their daughter is a student in grade seven, and their youngest son is two-and-a-half years old.



Shapna sells Gutu urea from her shop.

Before 2014, the family mainly depended on Tapan's business. A sub-assistant agriculture officer (SAAO) of the Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE) and IFDC-Walmart field monitoring officer (FMO) met Shapna in 2014. The FMO and SAAO were looking for promising rural women who were interested in starting a new business with a fertilizer briquetting machine. After interviewing several women, Shapna was chosen to be promoted, since she was interested in starting a business to improve her family's income. DAE and IFDC field staff explained to Shapna the objectives of the IFDC-Walmart activity – to assist rural women to increase the productivity of high-value vegetable crops with improved technologies such as GAPs, including FDP, and to empower women to increase their income and improve the nutrition status of their family members. They also informed her that the project was offering training to women farmers on GAPs and FDP application in vegetable crops. This technology has several benefits, including increase in yields, saving on fertilizer costs, production of a uniform crop, fewer weeds, fewer pest attacks, and a reduction in greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions.

The IFDC-Walmart Phase I project facilitated the purchase of a fertilizer briquetting machine for Shapna at a cost reduction of 80 percent. Her husband initially was not convinced that his wife had the ability to run a business of her own. But she told her husband that she attended an IFDC-Walmart training program and felt

confident she could run the business. Her husband reluctantly paid the 20 percent cost of the fertilizer briquetting machine, which pleased Shapna. Shapna attended one of the IFDC-Walmart-organized training programs for machine owners on maintenance, bookkeeping, and operation of the machine. After the training, she began to play a greater role in her husband’s shop, which became a family business. Shapna is the only woman BMO in her area. She started her business with full dedication and proved her ability by immediately making a profit. She transformed herself into a successful female entrepreneur.

Establishing herself as an entrepreneur was not an easy task. When she first decided to move into the *Guti* business and started visiting the market in Madra, male fertilizer traders teased her and questioned her ability as a businesswoman. But Shapna ignored their negative attitudes and continued to focus on growing her business as an FDP trader by investing in customer service and positive relationships with her clients. Table 2 shows a comparison of Shapna’s *Guti* business from 2014-15 to 2016-17.

Table 2. Comparison of *Guti* Business of Shapna from 2014-15 to 2016-17

Year	<i>Guti</i> Produced (mt)	<i>Guti</i> Sold (mt)	Sold Price (Tk/kg)	Sale Proceed (Tk)
2014-15	32	32	19	608,000
2016-17	67	67	19	1,273,000

The demand for *Guti* fertilizer is increasing every day in vegetable and rice cultivation. Shapna generally purchases prilled urea at Tk 16 per kilogram (kg) and sells *Guti* urea at Tk 19/kg. After deducting the production cost and maintenance cost of the machine, she earns a net profit of Tk 2/kg. She is gradually improving her business, and the family is becoming more comfortable as her income increases.

Shapna became a member of a community women’s group and has dedicated herself as a facilitator for future women entrepreneurs. She also actively participated in AVPI-IFDC activities, such as a motivational meeting and a BMO workshop. She spends her time motivating other farmers to use FDP and GAPs in their crop production which, in turn, increases her client network.

“My husband initially did not really trust my ability, but now he is very delighted to see my efforts and outcomes,” said Shapna happily.

Technical Activities

Summer Season 2018: Since February 2018, AVPI has implemented its summer season field activities, such as women horticulture farmers' training on GAPs (including FDP), motivational meetings with previously trained women horticulture farmers, motivational workshops and operational training of BMOs, farmers' orientation training for demonstration establishment, vegetable marketing seminars, and the establishment of FDP demonstration plots to show the results of GAPs using FDP compared to farmers' practice with broadcast urea.

AVPI completed the following activities for the summer 2018 season during May 2018.

Improving Farmer Access to Market Information

- **Vegetable Marketing Seminar:** In May 2018, AVPI organized one vegetable marketing seminar at Meherpur Sadar upazila in Meherpur district. The purpose of the seminar was to improve the women farmers' market knowledge and their access to market information, including market demand, post-harvest handling, and product quality. The program highlighted the findings of three surveys conducted under AVPI. These are: (a) assessment of IFDC-Walmart women farmers' knowledge on vegetable and fruit market information; (b) survey on women growers of vegetable and fruit seedlings and saplings on a commercial basis; and (c) study on vegetable and fruit market information. A total of 40 people (20 women and 20 men) participated in the seminar, including an upazila agriculture officer, an SAAO of DAE; a district marketing officer (DMO); an NGO representative; 20 women farmers; and 16 market actors (faria/bepari/aratdar/paiker/retailers) from Sadar, Gangni, and Mujibnagar upazilas of Meherpur district. The DAE officials and DMO extended their thanks to the Walmart Foundation and IFDC for organizing the seminar and discussed the importance of a good marketing network and quality products for better farmer incomes. The women farmers and the market actors were divided into four groups for conducting a group exercise on strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT), followed by a presentation from each group. All three targeted seminars (100 percent) for summer season 2018 were completed, with the total participations of 118 people (55 women and 63 men).

Table 3 provides information on the activities accomplished as of May 2018 against targets for the 2018 summer vegetable season.

Table 3. Activities Conducted for 2018 Summer Vegetable Season Through May 2018

Activities	Unit	AVPI Progress Through May 2018			Remarks
		Target	Actual	%	
Objective 1: Fertilizer Deep Placement (FDP)/Good Agricultural Practices (GAPs)					
Farmer training on GAPs and FDP	Number	70	70	100%	
Demonstration farmer orientation training	Number	1	1	100%	
Establishment of demonstration plots	Number	20	20	100%	
FDP demonstration field days	Number	10			
Farmers' field crop cuts	Number	30			
Motivational meetings with beneficiaries trained under IFDC-Walmart Foundation partnership	Number	50	50	100%	
Motivational workshops and operational training for agro-input retailers/briquetting machine owners	Number	2	2	100%	
Design and development of technical booklets, leaflets, flyers, posters, signboards, flags, promotional bags, and caps	Number	*	*		Continuing activity
Objective 3: Improving Farmer Market Knowledge/Access to Market Information					
Vegetable marketing seminars	Number	3	3	100%	

Media Campaign: AVPI prepared three promotional videos on: (1) a successful woman farmer who is playing a key role in disseminating GAPs and FDP for crop production in the community; (2) a successful woman BMO who is running her briquetting business with good profit, ensuring the supply of fertilizer briquettes, and motivating other farmers to use GAPs and FDP; and (3) overall AVPI project activities and results achieved. These videos will be shared with stakeholders of the AVPI project. The three videos have been posted on the IFDC website: <https://wp.me/p4IvOU-4pk>.

They are also available individually on IFDC's YouTube channel:

- Video 1: <https://youtu.be/7UiHIc538Nc>
- Video 2: <https://youtu.be/Emgq9KKkipg>
- Video 3: <https://youtu.be/JeFjwGNI8Vo>

The media campaign for AVPI activities during May 2018 is shown in Table 4, covering daily national newspapers, local print media, electronic media, and online news. In the media campaign, Walmart Foundation, as the donor, is always emphasized in relation to AVPI activities.

Table 4. Newspaper and Television Reports, News, and Publicity, May 2018

Sl. No.	News Heading	Media	Date/ Time	Remark
A. Electronic Media				
	Vegetable and Fruits Marketing Seminar at Meherpur Sadar, Meherpur	Somoy TV	May 15, 2018	News at 7.00 A.M.
B. Print Media				
(ii) Local Newspaper				
1.	Vegetable and Fruits Marketing Seminar at Meherpur Sadar, Meherpur	The Daily Matirdaak	May 15, 2018	Hard Copy of News Documented
2.	Vegetable and Fruits Marketing Seminar at Meherpur Sadar, Meherpur	The Daily Pashchimanchal	May 15, 2018	Hard Copy of News Documented
3.	Vegetable and Fruits Marketing Seminar at Meherpur Sadar, Meherpur	The Meherpur Pratidin	May 16, 2018	Hard Copy of News Documented

Reporting

The AVPI Monthly Report of April 2018 was submitted to the Walmart Foundation.