Co-ordinating a response to Fall Armyworm and Lumpy Skin Disease in Bangladesh

22 January 2020, Dhaka, Bangladesh – Experts have gathered in response to two agricultural outbreaks in Bangladesh – Fall Armyworm, a pest that affects crops, and another of Lumpy Skin Disease, that affects cattle.

Fall Armyworm can cause serious damage to food production. The invasive pest is capable of attacking more than 80 species of crops – including cultivated rice and maize – resulting in considerable crop losses. In 12 African countries Fall Armyworm causes the yearly loss of nearly 18 million metric tons of maize and in 2017 caused famine in several of the affected countries.

Fall Armyworm was first detected in Bangladesh in late 2018. It cannot be eradicated and although crop losses have been minimal, without effective control and management the pest may threaten food and nutrition security and the livelihoods of hundreds of thousands of smallholders. Latest figures show that 37 districts have reported cases of Fall Armyworm.

Lumpy Skin Disease is a disease affecting cattle, characterized by the appearance of skin nodules. It is mainly spread through mosquitoes, flies, and ticks. The disease impacts heavily on cattle production and milk yields. An affected cow can go from producing 20 litres a day to two litres a day. Poor, small-scale, and backyard farmers are often hit hardest.

For a long time the virus was restricted to sub-Saharan Africa. Over the past decades, however, it has slowly invaded new territories. The first outbreak in Bangladesh was reported to the Department of Livestock Services in July last year. More than half a million cattle in Bangladesh are thought to have been affected. There is no treatment for Lumpy Skin Disease. Large-scale vaccination is the most effective way to limit the spread of the disease.

Food Security Cluster
In response, the Bangladesh Food Security Cluster (co-led by FAO and WFP) organized a workshop in Dhaka, where technical experts, government officials, and other stakeholders discussed the status of the outbreaks and measures to combat them. A number of recommendations were made. These include
improving awareness, planning, and training; the development of joint assessment tools; and a co-
ordination mechanism for agricultural emergency preparedness and response.
FAO Representative in Bangladesh Robert D Simpson said: “Both Fall Armyworm and Lumpy Skin Disease
threaten the livelihoods of many smallholder farmers across Bangladesh. Early action is needed to prevent
significant escalation. We must work together as a whole development community to do all we can to
improve and scale up efforts to prevent their further spread.”

**Wider FAO response to Fall Armyworm**

Last month FAO launched a new three-year Global Action for Fall Armyworm Control to ensure a strong
coordinated approach at country, regional and global levels. The Global Action for Fall Armyworm Control
will reinforce efforts to discourage the widespread use of chemical pesticides, and emphasise prevention.
It will advocate for robust monitoring and early warning systems and the mobilization of resources for
applied research geared towards practical and efficient solutions.


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