Summer vegetable seeds distribution among farmers in Cox’s Bazar

Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO) has been actively supporting the local community in Cox’s Bazar since October 2017. In partnership with the Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE), Department of Fisheries (DoF), Department of Livestock Services (DLS), FAO is empowering the local farmers through strengthening of farmers’ groups, enhancing technical capacity of the marginalized and smallholder farmers in four Sub-district of Cox’s Bazar i.e. Cox’s Bazar Sadar, Ramu, Teknaf and Ukhiya. FAO with the Forest Department is also leading reforestation and environmental rehabilitation activities in Cox’s Bazar.

FAO is obliged to stand with the Government of Bangladesh to combat the outbreak of COVID-19 which is predicted to affect food security and livelihood of people worldwide including Bangladesh. The Government of Bangladesh has taken comprehensive actions including general holiday to combat the outbreak and overcome the negative impacts of the crisis in the short and long run. One of the priorities is to address the negative impacts of the outbreak on agricultural production, food supply and demand with special focus on the most marginalised people.

Hon’ble Prime Minister (PM) Sheikh Hasina during her video conference with government officials on 31st March 2020 therefore emphasised, ‘the most important thing is food security. Our food production must go on. We have to ensure that not a single inch of agricultural land remains uncultivated so that we can fulfil our food security. Efforts need to be taken to utilize whatever land you have; grow something in your yard; rear chicken, goats, etc. Aiming at the next season, agricultural input and support needed should be ensured so that we can overcome the global recession’. The prime minister also stressed on the importance of the hygiene awareness at the community level.

In line with the Government guidance, Department of Agricultural Extension and FAO would like to distribute six varieties of summer vegetable seeds (i.e. Okra, cucumber, bitter gourd, eggplant, Indian spinach and radish) among 16,000 marginal and smallholder households in FAO intervened four sub-districts in Cox’s Bazar. FAO has planned to distribute 300 grams for each marginal farmer (i.e. total 8,000 households) and 420 grams for each smallholder farming households (i.e. 8,000 households). In this regard total 5.76 tons seeds will be distributed in growing summer vegetables at homestead and field for improving households’ nutrition, especially for the women and children and income from surplus sales.
Followings are the steps for distribution of summer vegetable seeds:

- Finalize the farmers’ list (i.e. muster roll for selected farmers) in each Sub-district in clustering them according to community, village, block, union and Sub-district (Upazila);
- The LoA partners’ staff and FAO will finalize the list of farmers for facilitating smooth distribution;
- Ensure that the farmers’ list distribution materials quantity and distribution plans are endorsed by the DDAE (Deputy Director of Department of Agricultural Extension), Cox’s Bazar and communicated to the respective Upazila Nirabhi Officer (UNO) and Upazila Agriculture Officer (UAO);
- The Seed distribution point (SDP) will be selected together with the Farmers’ groups leader and project staff based on the accessibility of the farmers’ groups leader at nearest place of the farmers’ village or union considering the COVID-19 situation;
- Ensure that selected Community Service Provider (CSP) i.e. the LoA partner’s union based field staff will receive the predefined quantity of union wise distribution materials from the FAO’s warehouse in Cox’s Bazar;
- Relevant DAE staff will be informed in advance so that DAE ‘s extension staff i.e. Sub-Assistant Agriculture Extension Officer (SAAO) will be presented at the distribution spot i.e. at union or community center place;
- Planning with SAAO before the distribution of seeds and SAAO (Sub-Assistant Agriculture Officer) in respective area will provide instant orientation to the farmers on seed, plantation techniques and other management issues;
- FAO staff will present at the warehouse and the seed distribution points to facilitate and monitor the process and quality of the activity;
- Necessary preparation for managing environment at distribution point, health and hygiene protective measures, security, visibility, first aid, social distancing for COVID-19 will be maintained;
- At the warehouse the CSP will be oriented on COVID-19 health and awareness including social distancing, wearing of masks and hand gloves for receiving, transportation and distribution of the materials;
- In each distribution spot the farmers’ leader of each group will be presented and a brief COVI-19 awareness message will be provided to the farmers’ leader before distribution of the materials; a leaflet on COVID-19 awareness for each farmers’ household will be provided with the distribution materials;
- Only 4-5 farmers’ leader can present at the distribution spot at a time and must wear mask and receive the materials maintaining the social distancing;
- The farmers’ leader will distribute the material door to door at the farmers level maintaining social distancing;
- The farmers’ leader will collect signature from each farmers on the provided muster roll and CSP will collect it at later stage;
- FAO will pay the transport cost for each farmers’ leader for receiving of the materials following the organizational financial rules.