



Feed the Future Country Fact Sheet

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Mechanization and Access to Markets Empower Women Farmers in Bangladesh



Shirin Akhter/CSISA-MI

Monowara Begum purchased a seeder and fertilizer drill with support from Feed the Future. Many women in Bangladesh are active in the agriculture sector, but they face social, cultural and economic constraints to income and food security. Limits on their working hours, rate of pay and access to equipment can hinder or obscure their contributions to agricultural growth.

To address this issue, the Cereal Systems Initiative of South Asia (CSISA), funded by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) as part of the Feed the Future initiative, is actively engaging women farmers in Bangladesh in a project to expand access to mechanized agricultural technologies. Local groups of women farmers and individual service providers are already benefiting from equitable access to agricultural input and output markets and increasing their control over household income.

One of these women is Monowara Begum, a 48-year-old local service provider in southern Bangladesh who purchased a seeder and fertilizer drill in November 2014. "In comparison to my power tiller service, the number of my clients has increased a lot since purchasing the seeder," she says.

The drill, researched and developed by CSISA, simultaneously tills, plants and fertilizes crops with greater precision than other equipment. It is marketed by local agricultural retailer and private sector partner RFL, and costs approximately \$750. Monowara paid a little more than \$300 in cash from her own savings; the rest was financed under RFL's cost discount offer as part of the mechanization project's effort to help make farm machinery more affordable and boost technology adoption across Bangladesh's agriculture sector.

Members of a local cooperative of 25 women farmers, of which Monowara is president, share the drill—and their earnings. Monowara receives 51 percent for the equipment rental and the end user receives the remaining 49 percent.

To encourage and equip more women farmers to succeed, USAID trained 463 women to use agricultural machinery in just the early months of the project. In the city of Khulna, more than 100 women participated in training events between January and March 2014. Three of them are renting machinery like Monowara's seeder and fertilizer drill as a result, serving 127 farmers, 82 of whom are women, helping them plant and maintain their fields for more bountiful harvests.

"The seeder and fertilizer drill are benefiting both the farmers and service providers," Monowara says. "Besides, the machine

saves two times the cultivation cost for the farmers.”