

Feed the Future South Asia Eggplant Improvement Partnership

The Feed the Future Biotechnology Partnership consortium offers an integrated, demand-driven approach to boost food security and economic growth by introducing and stewarding agricultural biotechnology to food cropping systems in Bangladesh and the Philippines.

Over the past decade USAID supported the Agricultural Biotechnology Support Project II (ABSP II), a consortium of public and private institutions in Asia and Africa with support from Cornell University. The consortium successfully developed fruit and shoot borer resistant (FSBR) eggplant (Bt eggplant) for Bangladesh and the Philippines. In October 2013, Bangladesh became the first country in South Asia to approve commercial cultivation of a genetically engineered food crop. In order to realize the full impacts of the progress made in ABSP II, USAID provided a three-year (2015 – 2018) award under the Feed the Future Biotechnology Partnership to facilitate the late-stage development, deregulation, commercialization and dissemination of Bt eggplant in Bangladesh and Philippines.



Bangladesh eggplant farmer Md. Milon Mia (l) and his father (r), from the Bogra district, show Tony Shelton (center) the difference between the lack of infestation by the fruit and shoot borer in Bt eggplant compared to the complete infestation in non-Bt eggplant. Photo: Arif Hossain/Cornell

In February 2014, Begum Matia Chowdhury, MP, Honorable Minister, Ministry of Agriculture, released four varieties of Bt eggplant to 20 farmers of Bangladesh. With the establishment of the 20 Bt eggplant demonstration plots in 2014, 108 more in 2015 and more than 250 plots in 2016, BARI reported a noticeable decrease in fruit and shoot borer infestation, increased yields, decreased use of pesticide and improved income for farmers. Three additional Bt eggplant varieties have been approved by the National Technical Committee for Crop Biotechnology (NTCCB) core committee for release in Bangladesh.

The Feed the Future South Asia Eggplant Improvement Partnership addresses and integrates all elements of the commercialization process — including technology development, regulation, marketing, seed distribution, and product stewardship. It also provides strong platforms for policy development, capacity building, gender equality, outreach and communication.

The project areas mandated by USAID are: 1) Insect resistance management and Environmental Safety studies, in support of Stewardship Best Practices and Environmental Risk Assessment to support the Initial Environmental Examination work associated with Bt eggplant. These studies will have a primary focus of capacity building within the Bangladesh Agricultural Research Institute (BARI) and provide needed information for proper stewardship; 2) Post commercial communication support for Bt eggplant in Bangladesh; 3) Seed commercialization plan developed in cooperation with BARI that addresses quality control and assurance, product support and stewardship to support seed dissemination and use by Bangladeshi farmers. These studies will have a primary focus of capacity building within BARI.

To learn more about Feed the Future South Asia Eggplant Improvement Partnership visit <http://bteggplant.cornell.edu/>.