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Cotton cultivation expands in Kushtia as Bangladesh seeks to reduce import dependence

Cotton cultivation is gaining momentum in parts of Bangladesh, particularly in Daulatpur Upazila, where farmers are increasingly turning to the crop as a profitable cash source. The upazila alone produces cotton worth nearly Tk 1 billion annually, contributing significantly to the country's domestic production.

Around 2,000 farmers in the area are currently engaged in harvesting cotton as the picking season approaches its end. The fluffy white cotton bolls are manually collected from the plants using baskets or cloth bags hung around the farmers' necks and later stored in large sacks for sale.



Figure: Farmers in the region cultivate high yielding varieties such as Rupali 1, White Gold 1 and 2, DM 4 hybrid, CB Hybrid and Desi Ufshi. Courtesy; TextileToday

Local farmer Nazrul Islam from Dharmadaha village cultivates cotton on four to five bighas of land every year. He said the cultivation cost per bigha, including fertilizers, seeds and pesticides, is around Tk 20,000. With favorable yields, farmers can sell cotton for Tk 60,000 to Tk 70,000 per bigha, making the crop a viable alternative to traditional farming.

According to the Cotton Development Board, cotton has been cultivated on nearly 4,895 hectares of land across the Kushtia Meherpur region this year, close to the targeted 4,900 hectares. Of this, about 2,434 hectares are located in Daulatpur, highlighting the area's growing importance in Bangladesh's cotton sector.

Farmers in the region cultivate high yielding varieties such as Rupali 1, White Gold 1 and 2, DM 4 hybrid, CB Hybrid and Desi Ufshi.

Hybrid seeds cost around Tk 3,000 per kilogram. Cotton generally takes six months to mature, with seeds planted in July and August and harvesting taking place between December and February.

Despite the encouraging production levels, farmers say they face several challenges. Many complain about limited competition in the market, forcing them to sell cotton at around Tk 4,000 per maund through specific buyers. Labour shortages during harvesting also remain a concern, often leading to delays in picking mature cotton.

Agriculture experts note that Bangladesh still depends heavily on imported cotton to support its large textile and garment sector. The country produces only a small portion of the total requirement of about 8.5 million bales annually, making it one of the world's largest cotton importers.

To reduce import dependence, authorities and the Cotton Development Board are encouraging farmers to expand cotton cultivation through training programmes, technical assistance and financial incentives.

This year, the government has provided incentives worth Tk 180 million to cotton farmers across the country.

Officials believe that increasing domestic cotton production could strengthen the supply chain for Bangladesh's textile industry while improving the income of rural farmers.