

Integrated Approach to Enhancing SPS Capacity in Bangladesh

Project Report

01.10.2023 to 31.05.2025

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Name of Subcontractors/Sub-awardees: N/A

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Major Counterpart Organizations	CABI
Geographic Coverage (cities and or countries)	Bangladesh
Reporting Period:	01-10-2023 to 31-05-2025

Project Description/Introduction

*Short and concise introductory section that gives a quick overview of the project, goals/objectives, target beneficiaries, geographical locations, etc. This is a standardized paragraph that can be used in each quarterly report. It should be **BRIEF**, no more than one page*

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS)/Trade and Regulatory Capacity Building Division (TRCBD), provides trade partners with capacity building that enables them to adopt and implement obligations under the international Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) Agreement of the World Trade Organization (WTO). FAS and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) work hand in hand to strengthen Bangladesh's ability to improve its institutional regulatory system through the Bangladesh SPS Trade Capacity Building Program. This Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) supports the USDA Foreign Agricultural Service's (FAS) Strategic Plan by supporting the following:

I. Trade policy by pursuing the development of rules-based international systems that facilitate global trade.

2. Trade capacity building and food security by enhancing partner countries' capacity for agricultural development and participation in international trade.

Overarching activity objectives and expected key result areas

USDA/FAS partners with APAARI to assist the Government of Bangladesh in enhancing its Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) capacity to meet international trade standards and obligations. Under the second phase of the project, the following four key objectives are being addressed to strengthen the national phytosanitary system and regulatory frameworks:

1. To strengthen NPPO capacities to develop quarantine pest lists and surveillance systems complying with international SPS trade standards
2. To strengthen in-house NPPO capacity to conduct Pest Risk Analyses (PRAs), phytosanitary inspections, and treatments
3. To enhance capacities in market access negotiations, SPS diplomacy, and related policies to align with international standards and obligations
4. To enhance the capacity of the Government of Bangladesh to develop and implement biopesticide regulations

The implementation of the project is structured with a clear division of responsibilities between the partnering organizations, as proposed by USDA.

CABI, APAARI, and USDA identified the strengths of each organization in jointly implementing this project. CABI will take the lead in the key areas associated with Objective 1: strengthening NPPO capacities to develop quarantine pest lists and surveillance systems that comply with international SPS trade standards. For Objective 2, CABI will focus on enhancing in-house NPPO capacity to conduct Pest Risk Analyses (PRAs), phytosanitary inspections, and treatments. APAARI, with its expertise, will lead Objective 3: enhancing capacities in market access negotiations, SPS diplomacy, and related policies to align with international standards and obligations. For Objective 4, APAARI will focus on enhancing the capacity of the Government of Bangladesh (GoB) to develop and implement biopesticide regulations.

Preparatory Activities

Several preparatory actions were undertaken to lay the groundwork for successful project implementation in Phase II. APAARI facilitated training sessions for PQW staff to enhance their familiarity with the SPS IMS system. Regular virtual engagements were conducted to monitor progress and address implementation challenges. Implementation teams were finalized,

comprising local coordinators, advisors, IT experts, and technical specialists in phytosanitary compliance. Terms of Reference (ToRs) for these roles were also finalized.

Additionally, a review was conducted on the status of biopesticides and MRLs in Bangladesh. Continued coordination with the PPW ensured alignment with USDA-APAARI regulatory recommendations and national objectives for food safety and export readiness.

The Inception Workshop for the second phase of the USDA-APAARI project, titled “Integrated Approach to Enhancing SPS Capacity in Bangladesh,” was held on February 24, 2024. The event marked a significant step in reinforcing Bangladesh’s Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) systems to support agricultural trade. The Government of Bangladesh, represented by the Joint Secretary of the Ministry of Agriculture, reaffirmed its strong support for the project and emphasized the importance of building SPS capacity to expand and diversify exports.

APAARI presented key achievements from the first phase and outlined the strategic direction and action plan for the second phase, which received endorsement from stakeholders. Swisscontact discussed improvements to the SPS Information Management System (IMS) and the application of Multi-Criteria Decision Analysis (MCDA) to prioritize export commodities. CABI highlighted the promotion of biopesticides, leading to ongoing collaboration with BARI, which also shared progress on biopesticide regulation and pesticide residue analysis.

Private sector representatives, including BFVAPEA, emphasized the value of the SPS IMS for trade compliance. Land O’Lakes and Bangladesh Tree Foundation contributed insights on PRA and SPS measures. The Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE) shared plans to improve market access for high-value crops through enhanced surveillance, product-specific SPS systems, and capacity building.

The workshop effectively brought together public and private sector actors, outlined a coordinated implementation path, and demonstrated a collective commitment to strengthening Bangladesh’s SPS framework in alignment with international trade standards.

Activity Implementation Progress

A comprehensive **desk review** was conducted to assess the status of Bangladesh’s top ten traded agricultural commodities. These were categorized into broad groups such as cereals, pulses,

fruits, vegetables, roots and tubers, and oilseeds. Subsequently, a second review focused on pests and pesticide residues relevant to these commodities. Key pests affecting these trade crops were identified and listed. Furthermore, the review examined permissible pesticide residue levels and other contaminants, as outlined by the Bangladesh Food Safety Authority (BFSA), with the aim of aligning national Maximum Residue Limits (MRLs) with international standards.

In-person meetings were convened with stakeholders and potential collaborators to align on implementation priorities. APAARI engaged a range of participants from government, industry, and international organizations, resulting in collaborative agreements covering biopesticide research, capacity building, participatory rural appraisal (PRA), and regulatory guideline integration. Discussions with USAID and USDA-FAS focused on project responsibilities and the refinement of the Phase II work plan.

A multi-stakeholder **workshop** was held to prioritize agricultural commodities and trading partner countries. These priorities were formally discussed during a stakeholder consultation led by Swisscontact on February 24, 2024. Engagements with the Bangladesh Fruits, Vegetables, and Allied Products Exporters Association (BFVAPEA) followed, focusing on enhancing trade readiness for the selected commodities. An Expert Consultation Workshop (ECW) was also held in late February 2024, bringing together stakeholders to finalize a prioritized list of pests and pesticides significant for agricultural trade. These activities underscore a collaborative and evidence-based approach toward strengthening Bangladesh's compliance with international phytosanitary standards.

As part of the ongoing USDA project, a dedicated SPS Information Management System (SPS IMS) web portal was developed. The Plant Quarantine Wing (PQW) of the Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE) began updating the portal with relevant data. To support this, APAARI organized capacity-building training for nodal PQW staff to manage and maintain the SPS IMS effectively. Further strategic planning took place in March and April 2024 to enhance the portal's scope by integrating contributions from a broader range of stakeholders. A formal work plan was developed to institutionalize regular information sharing and ensure long-term sustainability. In parallel, the Government of Bangladesh initiated an evaluation of the PQW's current organizational structure, considering the establishment of a National Plant Quarantine Authority (NPQA). A concept note is being drafted to guide the restructuring process.

In alignment with the recommendations made in Phase I, APAARI has continued its engagement with the Plant Protection Wing (PPW), Ministry of Agriculture (MOA), and relevant stakeholders to advance the integration of biopesticide regulatory frameworks into national legislation. An **Expert Consultant Workshop** was organized to bring together biopesticide policy experts and align the previously developed biopesticide regulatory guidelines with the revised Pesticide Act.

Further dialogue was held with senior officials, including Mr. Saiful Islam, Joint Secretary and Additional Director (Extension and Coordination) at DAE, who reaffirmed government support for this initiative. Additional discussions with the Bangladesh Agricultural Research Institute (BARI) and PPW focused on regulating biopesticides and addressing MRLs within food safety frameworks. In a significant development, the Pesticide Technical Advisory Committee (PTAC) approved the USDA-APAARI-supported biopesticide regulatory guidelines in March 2024. However, PTAC advised embedding these guidelines into the revised Pesticide Act to ensure their legal enforceability. In response, APAARI revised its work plan to include follow-up expert consultations aimed at supporting the formal legislative integration of the guidelines in collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture.

A virtual “Stakeholder Consultation on Biopesticides and SPS Institutionalization” meeting was held on June 25, 2024, with participation of key stakeholders. The meeting emphasized the regulation of chemical pesticides and promotion of biopesticides to enhance agricultural produce quality. Key actions included awaiting approval of biopesticide regulations, promoting local biopesticide production, and developing a web portal for SPS information. Training on biopesticide production, usage, and storage, as well as the development of sustainable business models and guidelines for stakeholders, were also prioritized.

Significant outcomes included the proposal for an SPS web portal by APAARI, plan to raise awareness on registration processes for biopesticides, and the emphasis on local microbial cultures. Tentative training programs were developed on biopesticide regulatory awareness, local strains production, biopesticide efficacy, MRLs awareness were deemed necessary, along with developing a sustainable business model and securing and maintaining the SPS portal. Discussion also covered the local manufacturing of biopesticides, their community use, and the importance of quality control.

In the third quarter of 2024, several formal and informal meetings were held with USDA - FAS, CABI, and in-country stakeholders in Bangladesh to enhance the collaboration among partners and stakeholders for this project, with the focus on biopesticide regulation and SPS compliance.

Initial discussion focused on task assignments, program goals and defining the roles and responsibilities. A virtual stakeholder consultation was conducted. Subsequent meetings addressed the details of the work plan, including activities and sub activities to develop a combined work plan with CABI. Key discussions include biopesticide regulations, awareness, research on efficacy of pre-harvest sprays as alternatives to hazardous pesticides, harmonizing with Good Agricultural Practices (GAP), and the promotion of local biopesticide production and development. The maintenance, content relevance, and updating process of the SPS web portal were also emphasized.

On July 11, 2024, the Asia-Pacific Association of Agricultural Research Institutions (APAARI) conducted a virtual meeting during which a demonstration of the SPS Information Management System (SPS IMS) web portal (<https://sps.apaari.org/>) was presented. The meeting was attended by representatives of both the team. The purpose of the meeting was to familiarize participants with the features of the portal, which is designed to streamline and enhance the management of Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) measures. This portal serves as a crucial resource for stakeholders involved in plant health, trade, and food safety, aiming to facilitate safe and efficient trade with Bangladesh by ensuring compliance with SPS standards.

A comprehensive desk research was conducted focusing on two key areas: biopesticide efficacy and Maximum Residue Levels (MRLs). The team compiled data on approximately 109 registered biopesticides in Bangladesh, assessing their crop-specific recommendations and evaluating literature on their role in reducing MRLs. Findings indicate a critical gap in the integration of biopesticide use during pre-harvest stages, despite their potential to lower pesticide residues. Simultaneously, a review of MRLs revealed persistent challenges in meeting international standards, with around 3% of fruit and vegetable exports reportedly rejected due to excessive residues. However, limited data exists on specific MRL levels, the commodities rejected, or the direct impact of such rejections. Key pesticides frequently found in local produce include Chlorpyrifos, Cypermethrin, and Malathion. These insights underscore the urgent need for enhanced monitoring, regulatory alignment, and promotion of biopesticide alternatives. Moving forward, efforts will focus on accessing disaggregated export rejection data and addressing the identified gaps through the SPS Information Management System (SPS-IMS) web portal.

A draft desk study on Bangladesh's SPS agreements, related acts, and policies has been initiated. This includes a background review of existing legislation related to SPS, examining key laws such as the Pesticide Ordinance (1971), the Plant Quarantine Act (2011), the Food Safety Act (2013), and the Plant Quarantine Rules (2018). These legal frameworks were reviewed to assess their

scope and implementation concerning SPS measures. Additionally, several key policies were examined, including the Proposed Biopesticide Regulations (2022), the Export-Import (EXIM) Ordinance (1980), the Import Policy (2015-18), the Export Policy (2018-21), Good Agricultural Practices (GAP), Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points (HACCP), and efforts towards harmonization with Codex Alimentarius standards. The review focused on understanding the current policy landscape and establishing a foundation for identifying gaps and areas for improvement in subsequent phases. In addition to identifying specific gaps within each act and policy, certain common gaps will be highlighted across both frameworks. The findings will contribute to the development of a comprehensive plan aimed at enhancing the safety and trade of Bangladesh's agricultural products.

On November 4, 2024, a virtual Kickoff Workshop was held between APAARI and CABI, bringing together key participants from CABI and APAARI members. The discussion focused on aligning efforts and identifying areas for collaboration towards mutual objectives. Key agenda items included delineating activities where APAARI and CABI can operate independently, with presentations by CABI, and specifying the support required from APAARI for objectives 1 and 2. APAARI, in turn, outlined areas where CABI's support would be instrumental for objectives 3 and 4. Additionally, the group deliberated on planning in-person events in Bangladesh, aiming for sequential scheduling to maximize participation while minimizing travel. The work plan was finalized following the discussion, marking a significant step in streamlining efforts for efficient collaboration.

The Awareness and Stakeholder Consultation Workshop on SPS IMS and Biopesticides for Trade Facilitation was successfully scheduled for December 8 and 9, 2024, at the Bangladesh Agricultural Research Institute (BARI), in Gazipur, Bangladesh. Prior to the workshop, from December 4 to 7, 2024, a series of strategic meetings were conducted with senior officials, including representatives from the MoA, MoC, DAE, BARC, and other relevant associations. The objective of these meetings was to sensitize stakeholders to the goals and activities of the second phase of the APAARI-USDA project.

The pre-workshop engagements aimed to:

1. Sensitize key stakeholders to the objectives and activities of the project's second phase.
2. Engage with government regulatory bodies, research institutions, academia, and private industry stakeholders to align priorities for SPS-enabled trade facilitation and biopesticide promotion.

3. Identify and align actionable steps to enhance SPS capacity and biopesticide adoption in Bangladesh.

The Awareness and Stakeholder Consultation Workshop on the SPS IMS Web Portal was held on December 8, 2024, with the participation of 68 stakeholders from diverse sectors, including regulators, researchers, academia, private industry, and import-export representatives. The workshop aimed to gather valuable input from these stakeholders to improve and update the SPS IMS web portal, ensuring it aligns with the needs of trade facilitation and regulatory compliance in Bangladesh. Discussions focused on identifying key gaps, sharing best practices, and proposing actionable recommendations for strengthening the portal's functionality.

The Awareness and Stakeholder Consultation Workshop on Biopesticides for Trade Facilitation was held on December 9, 2024, with the participation of around 53 stakeholders representing regulators, researchers from universities, academics, private industry, and the import-export sectors. The workshop aimed to gather insights on biopesticide use, evaluate their efficacy, and discuss findings from pesticide residue research to promote biopesticides as a sustainable alternative for trade facilitation. The discussions resulted in actionable recommendations to enhance biopesticide adoption and regulatory alignment in Bangladesh.

Closing Workshop

The Consolidation and Closing Workshop for the USDA-supported project on “Integrated Approach to Enhancing Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) Capacity in Bangladesh” was held on 29 May 2025 at the Lakeshore Grand Hotel, Dhaka. The event, implemented by the Asia-Pacific Association of Agricultural Research Institutions (APAARI), marked the formal closure of the project, which concluded prematurely due to strategic programmatic decisions. The workshop was graced by key national stakeholders and development partners and served as a critical platform to reflect on achievements, foster dialogue, and outline pathways for continuity. Dr. Ravi Khetarpal, Executive Director of APAARI, opened the event with a message of appreciation to USDA and emphasized the importance of leveraging project outputs through sustained institutional engagement. Mr. Md. Abdur Rahim, Director, Plant Quarantine Wing (PQW), DAE, highlighted the impact of project activities on quarantine modernization, while representatives from CABI, private seed companies, and regulatory agencies offered reflections on the project's contributions to trade readiness and SPS governance.

The workshop featured technical presentations and a panel discussion by national and international experts, focusing on achievements such as the development of the SPS IMS web portal, training of PQW officials, and stakeholder consultations on biopesticide regulation. Dr. S.K. Varaprasad, summarized the key milestones of the project and stressed the importance of local innovations and regional cooperation. Experts emphasized aligning national SPS standards

with international benchmarks, strengthening inspection infrastructure, and fostering regulatory coherence. The workshop concluded with a vibrant Q&A session and forward-looking dialogue led by Dr. K.S. Varaprasad and Dr. Khetarpal. While the project comes to a close, stakeholders reaffirmed their commitment to continue advancing SPS reforms through inter-agency collaboration, public-private partnerships, and integration into national policy frameworks.

Following the closing workshop, an afternoon stakeholder meeting was convened to specifically address the promotion and regulatory facilitation of biopesticides in Bangladesh. The discussion focused on identifying bottlenecks in the current registration process and exploring practical solutions to support local manufacturers. Key recommendations emerging from the meeting included reducing the registration timeline for biopesticides, simplifying safety data submission requirements, and creating a dedicated approval stream for biopesticide applications.

Participants agreed to formally raise these proposals at the upcoming meetings of the Pesticide Technical Advisory Committee (PTAC) and its Sub-Committee. The Additional Director of the Plant Protection Wing (PPW) committed to presenting these recommendations for consideration. The meeting also emphasized the importance of increasing awareness among farmers and input dealers about the benefits and use of biopesticides. Stakeholders further discussed the potential for collaborative efforts between research institutions and the private sector to accelerate commercialization and adoption of locally developed biopesticide products.

List of the stakeholders involved in the project included as separate annexure.

Communication and Dissemination activities

APAARI's Communication and dissemination activities were vital for the project as they enhance stakeholder awareness, foster engagement, and ensure transparency. These activities supported knowledge sharing across sectors, enabling evidence-based decision-making and capacity building.

Relevant documents, announcements and photos were published on the APAARI website (<https://www.apaari.org/>) and shared through social media channels (Linkedin, Facebook, X).

Project phase 1:

- Interlinking the SPS IMS web portal with the APAARI website (<https://sps.apaari.org/>)
- Bangladesh news paper article on the [New Project](#)
- Raised awareness through [APAARI Newsletter](#)

Project phase 2:

- Development of new webpage for [Integrated Approach to Enhancing SPS Capacity in Bangladesh](#)
- Press Release: [Awareness and Consultation Workshop on SPS IMS and Biopesticides Bangladesh](#)
- Secretariat News: [USDA-APAARI Project on Enhancing SPS Capacity in Bangladesh Concludes with Reflections and New Directions](#)
- Social media

A. Inception Workshop with all stakeholders on Integrated Approach to enhancing SPS Capacity on 29th February 2024

[Linkedin post 1](#)

[Linkedin post 2](#)

[Facebook post 1](#)

[Facebook post 2](#)

[X](#)

B. Awareness cum Stakeholder consultation workshop at Ghazipur, BARI, Bangladesh on December 8th and 9th, 2024

[Linkedin](#)

[Facebook](#)

[X](#)

C. USDA-APAARI Project on Enhancing SPS Capacity in Bangladesh Concludes with Reflections and New Directions

[Linkedin](#)

[Facebook](#)

[X](#)

Lessons Learnt

A key lesson learned from the project is the importance of balancing independent leadership with collaborative synergy, as demonstrated by CABI and APAARI each leading their respective areas while supporting one another to effectively achieve shared objectives. Additionally, the Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE) manages multiple overlapping projects aimed at enhancing food safety and SPS compliance, which highlights the critical need for effective knowledge transfer and retention across initiatives. Frequent changes in senior management within government management further emphasize the necessity of maintaining institutional

memory, underscoring the urgent priority of fully operationalizing and sustaining the SPS Information Management System (SPS IMS) web portal.

Implementation Challenges

1. Political Transition and Institutional Realignment

The political landscape in Bangladesh experienced a significant transition with the formation of a new government. This shift brought about major restructuring within key ministries and a reassessment of national development priorities. As a result, the implementation of several programs, including those under the Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) framework, encountered delays. The reassignment of ministerial responsibilities disrupted inter-agency coordination and slowed decision-making processes. Additionally, changes in senior personnel within the Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE) further compounded the delays, requiring additional time for stabilization and reorientation.

2. Evolving Bilateral Relations and Funding Discontinuation

Broader geopolitical dynamics between Bangladesh and the United States influenced development cooperation frameworks. A critical development in this context was the discontinuation of USAID funding to Bangladesh, which directly impacted the financial continuity of the SPS project. Consequently, the project had to be closed earlier than planned, affecting the completion of some long-term capacity-building initiatives and regulatory reforms. Despite this, core objectives were advanced through strategic prioritization and effective stakeholder engagement.

3. Multiplicity of Projects and Institutional Memory Gaps

DAE is concurrently managing multiple projects aimed at improving food safety and compliance with international SPS measures. While this reflects a positive investment climate, it has also created challenges in ensuring knowledge retention, coordination, and the institutionalization of best practices. Limited institutional memory and project handover mechanisms have made it difficult to sustain gains across initiatives. The project attempted to address this by documenting learnings and maintaining a centralized knowledge base.

4. Donor Coordination Challenges

The SPS landscape in Bangladesh is supported by a wide range of international donors, including the World Bank, Swiss Aid, CABI, and others. However, a lack of structured coordination among these donors—particularly those linked to U.S.-based agencies—has led to overlapping objectives and fragmented implementation. Although APAARI made significant progress in mapping SPS-related projects and identifying synergies, the absence of a unified donor platform limited the

strategic alignment of investments. Recognizing this, APAARI and USDA held discussions to improve donor coordination and initiated stakeholder consultations to streamline efforts.

5. Transition in USDA Project Team and New Partnerships

The transition within the USDA project team, including changes in leadership, temporarily slowed project momentum as new personnel required time to recalibrate strategies and align with established goals. However, strong support from USDA/FAS and national stakeholders helped mitigate these disruptions. Similarly, the integration of new implementation partners, such as CABI in the second phase of the project, required time for role clarification and establishment of operational protocols. While this contributed to initial delays, it also strengthened the project's collaborative foundation for future activities.