

Hill farmers show more interest in crop agriculture

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Traditional jhum farming in the hilly areas was once the main livelihood of the local people. The traditional practice was to clear land and burn the forest to cultivate crops. However, this had a negative impact on the environment and reduced crop production. Now, farmers are gradually moving away from slash-and-burn farming and are getting used to planned and sustainable farming systems.

Expansion of potential in cultivation of high-value crops:

Hill farmers are turning to crops that are more profitable and in demand in the international market than the traditional paddy, corn, and vegetables. Currently, dragon fruit, strawberry, orange, malta, pepper, ginger, turmeric, cardamom, coffee, basil leaves, black cumin, and tea trees are being cultivated. Dragon fruit and pepper are being cultivated commercially, especially in Kauhali in Rangamati, Thanchi in Bandarban, and Lakshmichari in Khagrachari. Not only the local market, a portion of these fruits and spices are now being supplied to the capital Dhaka and country's other major cities.

New horizon in coffee and cashew farming:

According to agricultural experts, if the uncultivated lands can be utilized here, about Tk 17,000 can be earned annually from cashew and coffee.

While talking to The Asian Age, Shahidul Islam,

director of the Research, Development and Extension of Cashewnut and Coffee Project, said, "The soil and climate of the hilly region are very suitable for these two crops. If this huge quantity of uncultivated hilly land can

been set up in different parts of the country, all of which are private enterprises. As a result, the marketing of locally produced crops has become easier. Besides, other farmers are becoming more interested in getting good

financial prosperity by cultivating mushrooms scientifically and commercially. Mushrooms have become quite popular among the people of this region as a medicinal and nutritious food. Due to the demand, women in the hills

calories, fat, and sodium, while being a good source of essential nutrients like selenium, potassium, riboflavin, niacin, vitamin D, protein, and fiber. It can be eaten with everything."

World-class lab being set up in Bandarban:

Tissue Culture Laboratory cum Horticulture Center Establishment and Development project is a timely and groundbreaking step in the transformation of hill agriculture. Through this project, the hill agriculture is not only modernized, but also opening the door to a new possibility in the lives of hill people. Through this project, farmers of these areas will be encouraged in alternative farming methods, such as - cultivation of improved varieties of fruits, flowers and high-value vegetables.

Project Director Talha Jubayer said, "We want the youths of the hills to take up agriculture as their main profession. For this, we are providing regular training to create entrepreneurs, teaching them the path of modern agriculture through technical assistance and pilot projects. Now the hill farmers are show more interest farming through tissue culture technology."

Deputy Director of the Bandarban Agricultural Extension Department, MM Shah Neyaz, told The Asian Age, "We are involving the local people in modern agriculture besides preserving their traditions. We put stressed on food security and women's empowerment."



be used for cashew and coffee cultivation, the country will not only meet its domestic demand, but will also be able to earn foreign exchange through the export of these two crops."

"A total of 22 cashew processing factories have

prices", he said.

Mushrooms being cultivated scientifically:

Mushrooms have been a popular food among the hill people for a long time. However, they used to cultivate them in traditional ways. Now, many families in the hills have regained

are also leaning towards profitable mushroom cultivation at low cost.

Dr. Akhtar Jahan Kakon, Project Director of Improvement of Nutrition and Reduction of Poverty through Mushroom Cultivation Project, said, "Mushrooms are low in