

Media Release

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Australia-Bangladesh partnership to study sustainable level of groundwater use

A new partnership launched today between Australia and Bangladesh will study water resource management in the northwest region of Bangladesh, the most productive cropping region in the country.

Australia's national research agency, CSIRO, will lead the project that brings together researchers and policy makers from the two countries to understand the sustainable level of water use, particularly groundwater use, for irrigation in the region.

The project was launched today in Dhaka at an inauguration workshop jointly organised by CSIRO and the Institute of Water Modelling, together with other partners including Water Resources Planning Organization, Barind Multipurpose Development Authority, Bangladesh Agricultural University, and Bangladesh Agricultural Research Institute. The project forms part of Australian Government's Sustainable Development Investment Portfolio, funded by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

"The northwest region of Bangladesh has the largest areas of cropping in the country and is crucial to Bangladesh's food security," says Dr Mohammed Mainuddin, the project's leader from CSIRO.

"The northwest region is also the region of greatest concern over falling groundwater levels, particularly in the Barind area, which have resulted in a lack of access to water for drinking and irrigation in some areas. This project will seek to understand the sustainable level of water use, particularly groundwater use, for irrigation in the region."

The project will apply CSIRO's knowledge and experience in integrated water resource management in order to contribute to improved groundwater management and agricultural production for the northwest region. Researchers will estimate water demand for current and future cropping scenarios, and estimate the sustainable limit of water use in the region by water balance and groundwater modelling.

This work aims to contribute to the nation's overall food security and economic prospects, especially amongst the poorest, which would in turn have significant benefits for women and girls.

Prof. Dr. Shamsul Alam, Member (Senior Secretary), General Economic Division, Planning Commission, Ministry of Planning, Government of Bangladesh was the 'Chief Guest' at the project's inauguration in Dhaka. Dr. Md. Akram Hossain Choudhury, Chairman, Barind Multipurpose Development Authority was the 'Special Guest' on this occasion.

Heads of each of the partner organizations also spoke in the inauguration and representatives from each of the relevant national and international organizations attended the workshop. The workshop was presided over by Prof. Dr. M. Monowar Hossain, Executive Director, Institute of Water Modelling.

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