

Policy Working Group Meeting on Trade and Employment in Agriculture

The second meeting of the Policy Working Group of Assessing and Addressing the Effects of Trade on Employment (ETE) project was held on 24 June at Conference Room, Chillies. The theme of the meeting was Trade and Employment in Agriculture. The meeting was co-chaired by Mr. Ghulam Hossain, Secretary, Ministry of Commerce and Mr. Mikail Shipar, Secretary, Ministry of Labour and Employment. Mr. Gagan Rajbhandari, Deputy Director, ILO Country Office for Bangladesh delivered the welcome remarks.



The meeting gathered representatives from Ministry of Commerce, Ministry of Labour and Employment, General Economics Division, Bangladesh Bank, Ministry of Industry, EC Delegation in Bangladesh, Bangladesh Employers' Federation and National Coordination Council for Workers' Education (NCCWE) to speak on different aspects of agricultural trade liberalization and its effects in labour market. Representatives from development partners namely Swedish Development Cooperation (SDC), USAID, GIZ, UNIDO, EU Bangladesh Trade Policy Support Programme also attended the meeting. Ms Hasina Begum, National Project Coordinator of the ETE Project facilitated the meeting.

Two recent ETE studies were presented and discussed in the meeting: (a) Skills for trade and economic diversification in Bangladesh focusing on agro-processing sector; and (b) Economic reforms and agriculture in Bangladesh: assessments of impacts using economy wide simulation model.





Emphasising the role of the policy working group in facilitating policy dialogue, Mr. Rajbhandari, during his welcome remarks said that the PWG is a forum for dialogue to build consensus on the labour market, employment and trade coherence issues, to identify priority areas and to guide the development of policy recommendations.



Mr. Md. Ghulam Hussain, Co chair of the PWG and the Secretary, Commerce said that one of the big challenges for the country is generating employment for the 1.8 million young who enters into the job market every year. Agricultural sector alone cannot absorb this huge labour force. Hence we should strengthen other manufacturing and service sectors as well for creating job opportunity for the new entrants. We should also address other investment related challenges such as poor infrastructure, marketing, product development, cold storage etc, he mentioned.



Emphasizing on land use and land management, Mr. Mikail Shipar, Co-chair of the PWG and the Secretary, Ministry of Labour and Employment said that as Bangladesh is a land scarce country therefore while discussing on economic reforms in agricultural sector we should focus on efficient land management and land use issue.

The PWG discussed the opportunities and challenges for Bangladesh with regard to Trade and Employment in Agriculture and pointed out that the country should harmonize its trade, employment and skill policies to reap the employment opportunities created from increased trade liberalization.