Unscrupulous traders in Akkelpur are making more profit through syndicates and manipulation

Akkelpur correspondent- The Agriculture Department has set a target of potato cultivation on 6120 hectares of land in Akkelpur, Joypurhat for the current season. In contrast, there is a demand of 9810 metric tons of potato seeds in the upazila. More than half of the total demand is available in the market for potato seeds stored in cold storage by farmers and collected by various companies. The harvesting of Aman paddy has not been completed in the upazila yet. Therefore, potato cultivation has not started in full swing. However, farmers are not getting potato seeds in the market as per their demand. Now most of the potato seed traders do not have potato seeds in their shops and warehouses. Some traders, after charging one to one and a half thousand taka more per maund than the fixed price, are secretly delivering potato seeds to the farmers in vans from unknown places in the early morning and again at night. In this way, unscrupulous traders are making profits of more than lakhs of taka by selling potato seeds this season. Even after the local upazila administration and agriculture department came to know about the matter, the mobile court has also imposed a fine on a person at one place. However, the upazila administration and agriculture department say that regular market monitoring of potato seeds is being carried out. Whenever irregularities are found, the mobile court conducts fines and warns the concerned.

According to the Upazila Agriculture Extension Department, a target of potato cultivation has been set for 6120 hectares of land in this upazila this season. Against the target, there is

a demand of 9810 metric tons of potato seeds. The work of harvesting and threshing of Aman paddy has not been completed yet. Therefore, potato cultivation has not started in full swing. With the amount of potato seeds available in the market, there should be no shortage of potato seeds. The agriculture department is regularly monitoring potato seeds at the field level.

Akkelpur upazila is the main agricultural area in the district. It is famous for cultivating vegetables including potatoes in the winter season. Talking to 15-20 farmers of the upazila, it was learned that there is a high demand for potato seeds from BADC, BRAC, ACI, Ispahani, Supreme (Diamond) and UN companies. Among them, BRAC seeds are in the highest demand. BRAC's A-grade seeds cost 3160 taka and B-grade 3040 taka. The prices of potato seeds from other companies are slightly higher depending on the type. However, potato seeds from any other company including BRAC are not available in retail shops. If these retailers are paid more than the stipulated one to one and a half thousand taka, they will provide potato seeds. Even though the shopkeepers charge a higher price, they do not give any receipt to the farmers. Potato farmers are worried about whether they will be able to cultivate potatoes in the current season due to the lack of potato seeds.

Md. Babar Ali, a farmer from Hijli area of the upazila, said, "My family needs 50 bags of seeds to cultivate potatoes on 12 bighas of land if each 40 kg bag weighs 40 kg. I have been going around retail shops for seven-eight days and I have not been able to get potato seeds. Potato seeds are not being sold at the fixed price. BRAC's potato seeds are being sold secretly for 4000 to 4500 taka and potatoes are being delivered in vans in the morning and at night. This time, potato seed traders have formed a syndicate.

Former UP member Md. Abdur Ratan said, for the past few days, I have not been able to buy a sack of potato seeds even by paying Dhanna in shops. Last year, the price of potato seeds

per sack was 2000 to 2500 taka. This time, despite the higher price, I am not getting potato seeds.

Abdur Razzak, owner of Bhai-Bhai Traders, a retail trader and seed dealer in Akkelpur College Market, said, I had deposited money with BRAC seed dealer in Joypurhat for 600 sacks of potato seeds this season. So far, the dealer has given me only 363 sacks of potato seeds. I am a seed dealer of Ispahani, Supim (Diamond) and BADC. I got 19 tons of Supim (Diamond) and 35 tons of Ispahani and 4 tons of BADC seeds. Currently, I do not have a single sack of potato seeds in my house. For the past few days, farmers have been coming and going to buy seeds. He claimed that he sold potato seeds at the fixed price.

Retailer Abdur Rashid Babu said, I had given a demand to Abdur Razzak, owner of College Bazar Bhai-Bhai Traders, for 750 sacks of Supim (Diamond) and 300 sacks of BRAC potato seeds. Razzak gave me 200 sacks of Supim (Diamond) potato seeds. I had given money to Golam Azam, a potato seed trader in Pathan Para area of Khetlal Upazila, for 500 sacks of BRAC and Yun seeds. Out of that, he gave only 200 sacks of Yun Company potato seeds. I have not received the money for the remaining 300 sacks even today. The supply of potato seeds is less than the demand. Therefore, potato seeds cannot be supplied as per the demand.

BRAC Seed Territory Sales Officer Md. Zahurul Islam said, there are 14 dealers in Joypurhat district. The dealers had demanded 15,000 metric tons of potato seeds. Against this, 6,400 metric tons of potato seeds have been supplied. Action is being taken if anyone sells at a higher price than the fixed price.

Upazila Agriculture Officer Krishibid Md. Imran Hossain said, the potato seed market is being monitored in various places including Tilakpur, Raykali, Gopinathpur, College Bazar in the

upazila. The local administration is cooperating in the monitoring. Md. Dulal Hosan, a retail seed trader in College Bazar, has been fined Tk 2,000 for charging higher prices for potato seeds. Some unscrupulous traders are syndicating potato seeds and looting more profits. Market monitoring is ongoing. There are 19 BADC dealers in this upazila.

Upazila Executive Officer Manjurul Alam said, there are complaints that potato seeds are being sold and stored at higher prices than the fixed price. No evidence is found when we go to those places based on the complaint. Market surveillance is being carried out. I have also told the BADC Seed Department in Dhaka about the potato seed crisis in Akkelpur Upazila