

EXPERIENCED FARMER MORE THAN DOUBLES HIS INCOME



Ponchanon Biswas and friends at the harvest

Ponchanon Biswas is a clerk at the high school adjacent to his home in Mohishdanda village, Assasuni, Satkhira. The limited salary from his job is not adequate to support his family of six. To supplement his income, for the last 20 years he has been cultivating shrimp, and has become an experienced farmer.

He has a total of 350.5 decimals (3.5 acres) of ghers (ponds), which he inherited from his family. In 270 decimals he cultivates rice in one season and shrimp and prawn in the next, leasing out his remaining 80.5 decimals of land to others.

In the past he has cultivated shrimp and prawn using traditional methods. The water in his ghers is only one foot deep. He would release some postlarvae (PL) on each lunar cycle and after a few months start harvesting, earning a total of 85,000-90,000 taka (US \$980 - \$1,040) each year from shrimp and prawn farming and 30,000 taka (US \$346) from selling rice. This helped meet his household needs. Since he started shrimp-farming he has faced major losses twice, of 70,000 taka soon after he started 20 years ago, and 100,000 just last year. The recent building of a new dam on the river he usually uses for his water supply meant he could no longer access salt water. He mixed in salt to try and save the situation but the shrimp did not survive.

SAFETI staff were visiting his village and suggested he enroll in the “Semi-intensive Shrimp-Prawn Rotational Farming” group that was being formed. He joined, and received the three SAFETI training modules. This year after harvesting his rice, he increased the depth of one of his ghers — of 70 decimals — so that it can hold six feet of water, prepared the pond dike and established biosecurity measures. On June 24, 2019, he stocked 9,000 SPF PL in his gher, and

then fed regularly.

He began his harvest on 18 September 2019, and in the first night harvested 166 kg of shrimp.

His three daughters who are studying in Satkhira City had come home to help and the family stayed up all night to carry the shrimp back to the house.

Ponchanon hopes that there will be a few more gher in his village next season where farmers follow the 'six key steps.' Meanwhile Ponchanon harvested another 116 kg from his gher as of September 30, for a total so far of 282 kg (995 kg/ha). At the same time he had been nursing golda PL in a separate gher for the last two to three months.

On September 20th, he released 1,188 of The golda PL into his gher with the remaining bagda. He plans to add 3,000 more after a week and will feed them regularly.

On top of all this, as his dykes are about 10 feet wide, he has been growing organic cucumber on them during the bagda cycle and has already harvested 2,000 kg and earned 60,000 taka (almost US \$700) from their sale. Next year he is planning to follow the technology in the rest of his gher.

"I have never harvested such a quantity at one time," exclaimed Ponchanon with excitement. "My wife, daughters and son helped me all through the night. It was like a festival to us, we were all so happy." Neighboring farmers came to see the successful harvest and are interested to follow the SAFETI technology next year