

National Wrap-Up Workshop 2025: Cooperative Business Transformation and Youth-Led Sustainable Farming for Future

Date: 29-30 November 2025; Venue: La Vita Auditorium, Lakeshore Hotel, Gulshan-2, Dhaka

Background:

Since 2020, the APFP-FO4A Project, supported by the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and later by the European Union (EU), has significantly contributed to strengthening Farmers' Organizations (FOs) in Bangladesh through improved governance, business plan development & implementation, and market linkage facilitation. As the National Implementation Agency (NIA), COAST Foundation, in partnership with the Asian Farmers' Association for Sustainable Development (AFA), has focused on developing sustainable cooperative business practices, improving their financial management practices and FO-led enterprises in their own areas.

Over the project period, COAST Foundation distributed more than BDT. 15 million to 5 of the FOs to implement their business plans following the cooperative business model. This model has helped farmers to use better inputs, regular information for quality production, secure direct access to markets, reduce their dependency on intermediaries, and achieve fair prices for their produces.

We practiced a participatory approach to feel the ownership. FO leaders and youth representatives have collectively improved their own business planning, developed project implementation plan, marketing strategies, strengthened governance processes, and enhanced the visibility of FO activities. This combination of organizational strengthening and business development has played a vital role in boosting farmers' confidence, assisting in decision-making, and contributing to more equitable market participation.

As the project reaches its conclusion, it has become essential to bring all stakeholders together to reflect on these achievements, review project learnings, and discuss the significance of cooperative business

approaches. At the same time, the workshop will offer an opportunity to outline a clear forward-looking agenda that includes agroecology, youth inclusion and climate-smart agriculture as future priorities for sustainable food systems.

Rationale:

The wrap-up workshop is grounded in the project's major achievements in strengthening FO governance and cooperative business operations. Throughout the APFP-FO4A implementation period, the project primarily focused on:

- a) Strengthening cooperative governance structures.
- b) Enabling cooperative business models for improved access to agri-inputs, services, and achieving just prices.
- c) Supporting FO-led business planning and organizational accountability, including business plan execution, monitoring, due diligence, and knowledge management.
- d) Support and influence FOs to bring forward the young and female farmers in leadership positions.
- e) Communication and visibility for wider reach.

These were the central operational pillars of the project, reflecting its actual achievements in Bangladesh. Therefore, the workshop will also provide a formal space to discuss how cooperative structures can serve as the foundation for youth-led, climate-resilient, and agroecological advancements in the coming years.

Objectives:

- a) To present key achievements of FO business plans, cooperative business model's effectiveness, and market linkages.
- b) To review progress in FO governance, financial management, organizational accountability, and youth engagement.

- c) To engage stakeholders in identifying policy and institutional gaps affecting the cooperative business model.
- d) To strengthen collaboration between the government, private sector, and development partners for market-oriented FO development.
- e) To identify opportunities for FOs to contribute meaningfully to the agricultural sector.

Key Discussions:

The workshop has been structured primarily to reflect both the achievements of the APFP-FO4A project and the strategic opportunities that lie ahead. The morning session will focus on the concrete accomplishments of the project e.g.; cooperative business model, improving cooperative governance, products promotion, etc. through PowerPoint presentations, and open discussion. We are expecting a grand opening of our knowledge management fair by the chief guest of the event.

Participants will observe how collective business plans, improved governance systems, cooperative marketing, and due diligence practices have supported farmers. The Knowledge Management Fair will reinforce these outcomes by allowing stakeholders to witness FO-led business initiatives directly.

Following this, the workshop will explore the role of youth in strengthening organizational coordination, communication, and leadership. The emergence of the Bangladesh Farmers Foundation (BFF) youth committees has brought renewed energy to FO activities, demonstrating how young farmers are shaping cooperative decision-making and supporting market-facing interventions. Their engagement has been creating a foundation for future innovation.

The session will shift toward the future direction of FOs' development in Bangladesh. While agroecology, climate-smart agriculture, and nature-based production systems were not part of the project's core activities, they represent essential pathways for future sustainability.

The workshop will therefore host a forward-looking policy dialogue, inviting experts, policymakers, and

FO leaders to consider how cooperative can support youth-led innovations, climate-resilient farming practices, and agroecological transitions. The session will not frame these as past achievements, but rather as critical national opportunities and priorities for the next phase of FO and agricultural development.

Expected Outcomes:

The workshop is expected to:

- a) Strengthen collective understanding of the significance of the cooperative business model for fair markets.
- b) Identify and strategize major capacity development areas to ensure sustainability of the farmers' organizations.
- c) Consolidate key learnings from FO governance, youth coordination, and business plan implementation.
- d) Build stronger commitments from the government, private sector, and development partners for FO-led enterprises.
- e) Develop a forward-looking strategic direction integrating agroecology, climate adaptation, and youth-led innovations.

Conclusion:

The APFP-FO4A national wrap-up workshop stands at an important crossroads for Bangladesh's agricultural sector. It marks the successful completion of a project that has strengthened cooperative business models, enhanced FO governance, and enabled small-scale farmers to secure better access to markets. At the same time, it launches a broader national conversation about how Bangladesh can prepare its farmers, especially young farmers, for a future shaped by climate change, sustainability challenges, and evolving market requirements.

By combining reflection with forward-looking dialogue, the workshop aims to position Farmers' Organizations at the centre of Bangladesh's agricultural future, ensuring that they continue to play a leading role in economic empowerment, climate resilience, and national policy transformation.