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**VALUE CHAIN ANALYSIS OF ONION MARKETING IN SOME SELECTED AREAS OF PABNA DISTRICT****MD. DIN-LL-ISLAM****RESEARCH ASSOCIATE****SHER-E-BANGLA AGRICULTURAL UNIVERSITY****SHER-E-BANGLA NAGAR****AIRIN RAHMAN****ASST. PROFESSOR****DEPARTMENT OF AGRIBUSINESS & MARKETING****FACULTY OF AGRIBUSINESS MANAGEMENT****SHER-E-BANGLA AGRICULTURAL UNIVERSITY****SHER-E-BANGLA NAGAR****ABSTRACT**

Onion (*Allium cepa* L.) is one of the most important and widely used vegetable and spice crops in Bangladesh as well as in many countries of the world. During winter, onion is widely cultivated all over Bangladesh. A large number of people are involved in the production and marketing of the onion. The imbalance in the supply-demand in onion is increasing every year due to low production coupled with an increased population. Realizing the increasing importance of onion as spice, the present study was undertaken with some objectives such as to identify the value chain & marketing channels. Many research and studies were conducted on Onion production and marketing is abroad. But in Bangladesh there are very few studies on onion marketing and value chain. Farmers in Pabna have achieved remarkable success in onion cultivation, officials said. Preliminary survey was conducted in Sujanagar upazila of Pabna district. The total sample size was 30, which include producer, faria, beparis, arathdar, wholesaler, retailer, consumer were selected purposively from different markets of Sujanagar Upazila. In the process of onion marketing the intermediaries are involved in a chain was: Farias, Beparis, Arathdars, Wholesalers and retailers. In the study area Faria purchased 100 percent from producer, beparis 66.67 percent from producer and 33.33 percent from faria. Arathdar buy 12.5 percent from producer, 25 percent from Faria and 62.5 percent from Bepari. Wholesaler purchased 11.11 percent from faria, 44.44 percent from bepari and 44.45 percent from the arathdar. Retailer purchased 54.29 percent from producer 31.42 percent from faria and 14.29 percent from wholesaler.

**KEYWORDS**

spice crop, consumer, intermediaries; value chain; marketing channel.

**1. INTRODUCTION**

Onion (*Allium cepa* L.) is one of the most important and widely used vegetable and spice crops in Bangladesh as well as in many countries of the world. It ranks first in production (889000 MT) and second in area (125101 ha) among the spices (BBS, 2008). It covers almost 36% of the total areas under spices. During winter, onion is widely cultivated all over Bangladesh. Farmers generally follow traditional method for cultivating onion in Bangladesh. Area and production of onion in Bangladesh during the last five years are given below; Although production of onion is increasing day by day, but in a land hungry country like Bangladesh it may not be possible to meet the domestic demand due to increase in population. There is an acute shortage of onion in relation to its requirement. Every year, Bangladesh has to import a big amount of onion from neighboring and other countries to meet up its demand. Total import of onion stood at 55499 metric tons in 2005 (BBS, 2007).

The imbalance in the supply-demand in onion is increasing every year due to low production coupled with an increased population. Onion suffers from many diseases, such as leaf blight, downy mildew, purple blotch, white rot, neck rot and Fusarium basal rot among which leaf purple blotch caused by *Alternaria porri* (Ellis) Cif. is a major one. This disease caused substantial loss of both bulb and seed yield of onion in most onion growing countries including Bangladesh. It is, thus, a serious bottleneck in the cultivation of onion. The extent of yield loss incurred by the diseases was not well documented; there were evidences of complete damage of a number of onion yields every year. Although water is regarded as the life blood for plants, it is generally believed that onion plants become susceptible to diseases when produced under irrigation.

So, many farmers do not apply irrigation to onion. Some farmers irrigate this crop, but with a lower amount and number of irrigation than required. However, proper irrigation practices and disease control measures may be the key components of the strategy to offset the imbalance in the supply-demand in onion.

Onion is grown extensively during winter season in Bangladesh, occupying the first position both in area (291000 acre) and production (872000 m tons) (BBS, 2010). It is grown in more or less in all the districts of the country. It is grown in all the district of the Bangladesh and its cultivation on commercial scale is found to be concentrated in greater district of Faridpur, Dhaka, Rajshahi, Comilla, Rangpur and Pabna. There is an acute shortage of onion in relation to be requirement. This necessitates an improvement of per hectare yield, which is possible through adoption of high yielding varieties and judicious application of fertilizer. The mean yield of onion in Bangladesh is very low (2.96t/acre) compared to world average of 6.99 t/acre (FAO, 1999).

**2. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

The specific objectives of the study are as follows:

- To identify the value chain of onion.
- To identify the marketing channels involved in the onion.

**3. JUSTIFICATION OF THE STUDY**

Agriculture sector contains to play a very important role in the economy of Bangladesh. Agriculture sector attained modest growth and experienced slow transition during the two decades since independence. The goal of the sector was to replace the traditional and vulnerable agriculture by modern agriculture capable of sustained growth.

The study would be justified on the following issue-

- The research would be helpful for the government research, planning and the policy making.
- It would provide information to farmers, intermediaries and consumer in providing their efficiency in onion marketing in the country.
- It would provide information about the marketing channel, value addition about the onion market in Bangladesh.
- It would add new knowledge in the field of onion market and build a foundation for further research in this respect.



#### 4. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The aim of the present chapter is to review empirical studies related to this price of research work. Many research and studies were conducted on Onion production and marketing is abroad. But in Bangladesh there are very few studies on onion marketing and value chain. Some important studies on onion production, which have been conducted in the recent past, are discussed below:

Rashid et al. (2002) conducted a study on an economics of Onion cultivation at Foridpur region in Bangladesh. They conducted that the profitability of the input utilization patterns in and the constraints to onion cultivation in Foridpur, Bangladesh were examined. Data for the crop year 1999-2000 were obtained from a sample of 100 onion farmers. Onion cultivated was profitable in study area. Excessive use of insecticides and fertilizers, lack of quality seeds and high cost of seedlings were some major production constraints of Onion production.

Farmers in Pabna have achieved remarkable success in onion cultivation, officials said. Although a majority of the onions produced in the country come from Pabna, the farmers in the district are more frustrated over poor market prices. According to the Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE) in the district, a total of 36,040 hectares of land in 9 upazilas in the district were brought under onion cultivation this year although the target was 33,100 hectares. Each hectare produced at least 10 to 10.5 tons of onions, while the amount was 8.5 tons last year, officials said.

Chanda (1990) conducted a study on onion and garlic in India. Area of production of onion garlic in the world and India, exports from other countries and factor limiting production and productivity in India are described. The research infrastructure, varietal improvement and productivity in India are described.

Mahmood (1995) examined the relative profitability of selected spices, compared with their competing crops. Among all competing crops onion was the most profitable crop with net profit of Tk. 26673, which was followed by potato (Tk 25875), lentil (Tk.20652.1) and garlic (Tk 16755.49) in respect of net return per hectare.

Singh (2005) conducted an economic study on production and marketing of vegetable in Bangladesh. He used data collected for the year 1997-98. The study analyzed the data on tomato, onion, arvia, okra, brinjal, and potato. He examined production costs and returns; marketable and marketed surplus; marketing cost; channels, margins and efficiency.

Hossain (1974) conducted a short analysis of consumer demand for onion in Maymnsingh town. The elasticity of onion has been estimated to be from 0.38-0.94 which indicated that one percent increase in consumer's aggregate expenditure would bring less than one percent increase in the quantity of onion demanded. The computed elasticity with respect to aggregated expenditure indicated that onion has an inelastic demand with per capita daily consumption of onion was estimated to be 0.93 seers during its peak supply period. The income elasticity of onion for the urban panel consumers was estimated to be from 0.38-0.94, which indicated that onion was a normal good and not a luxury food item of urban consumers. Price elasticity's of onions ranged from (-0.56 to -1.26) for low income people, and it ranges from -0.61 to -0.95 for high income people. The analysis or cross price elasticity of onion with respect to potato, been and cauliflower and cabbage provided pervasive results with unexpected signs.

Rahman (2004) studied effect of growth regulators on growth and yield of three varieties of onion growth from set. Three varieties of onion viz; Taherpuri, Zhitka, kalashnagar and four different growth regulators, namely IAA (200ppm), GA3 (100 ppm), NAA (200 ppm), CCC (500ppm) and control were used. The Taherpuri produced the highest, number of leaves per plant, bulb diameter, mean bulb weight, and bulb yield compared to control plants of onion.

From the above discussion, it is clear that several studies have been conducted on onion production and marketing in Bangladesh. The present study was, therefore undertaken to determine the profitability of onion and marketing of onion. Findings of the review would help conceptualization on the important aspects of the onion marketing system in general and understanding functions of the market actors in onion marketing in the selective areas in particular.

#### 5. METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

Farm management research depends on the proper methodology of the study. Proper methodology is a prerequisite of a good research. It's also involves collection of primary data from the farmers. The type of primary data to be collected however depends upon the nature of the study and its aims and objectives. It's also depends on availability of necessary resources, materials and time.

**5.1 SELECTION OF THE STUDY AREA:** Selection of the study area is an important step for the farm management research. "The area in which a farm business survey is to be carried out depends on the survey and the possible cooperation from the farmers" (Yang 1965). Such a study usually requires selection of an area for collecting data in accordance with the objectives set for the study.

The researcher himself conducted a preliminary survey in Sujanagar upazila of Pabna district to achieve the objectives of the study. Keeping this mind, five villages namely, Sadlapur, Vitbila, Raipur, khetupara, Bonkola under Sujanagar Upozilla in the district of Pabna were selected purposively because a large number of farmers grow onion in these areas.

The main considerations behind the selection of above Upazilas as study area are as follows:

1. The Upazilas were found to be good onion growing areas.
2. There was high expectation to get cooperation from the farmers and intermediaries.
3. Easy accessibility and good communication in the Upazilas.

**5.2 PERIOD OF STUDY:** Since farming is seasonal one, a farm business survey should cover a whole crop year in order to have a complete sequence of crops. The researcher must determine to what extent the information for a particular year represents normal or average condition, particularly for crop yields, annual production and price level. Farmers generally plant onion from mid-December to January and harvest after three or four months. The data collection period, therefore pertained this period of 2012.

**5.3 SELECTION OF SAMPLE AND SAMPLING TECHNIQUE:** It is not possible to make a farm business survey covering all farms. For this reason, sampling was done to select representative farms to minimize time and cost of the study. Producers were selected from different villages under the Upazilas. Farias, Beparis, Arathdars, Wholesalers, and Retailers were selected from different markets. A total number of 30 farmers and intermediaries who cultivated and traded onion where selected purposively from different villages and markets of the sujanagar Upazilas of Pabna.

**5.4 PREPARATION OF SURVEY SCHEDULE:** Preparation of survey schedule is an important part of the study. A comprehensive survey schedules were set to collect necessary information from the farmers in such a way that all factors in the production of onion could be included in conformity with the objectives of the study. Before finalizing the schedule, it was pre-tested for judging its suitability with respondents.

**5.5 COLLECTION OF DATA:** Obviously, both technical and socioeconomic data are needed in the relevant research. The researcher himself collected the data by interviewing the selected respondents. It was very difficult to collect accurate data since farmers did not keep any written records of their farm activities. To overcome this problem, all possible efforts were made by the researcher to ensure the collection of reasonably accurate information from the field. At first, the objectives of the present study were explained to the farmers and were requested to provide correct information so far as they could remember.

#### 5.6 METHOD OF DATA COLLECTION

**5.6.1 PRIMARY DATA COLLECTION:** Primary data were collected from primary producers, Bepari, Faria, wholesaler, and Retailer. Selected respondents were interviewed personally with the help of pre-tested questionnaires. Farmers' fields were also visited in order to get clear understanding, observations and perceptions about the production and marketing systems in the study area. Primary, secondary and terminal markets were also visited for primary data collection and, field perception and observation.

**5.6.2 SECONDARY DATA:** The secondary sources include govt. publications; annual reports, seminar papers, journals, published and unpublished thesis, and topic relected various books, BBS, web site etc.

**5.7 PROCESSING OF DATA:** The collected data were manually edited and coded. Then all the collected data summarized and scrutinized carefully. Data were processed to transfer to master sheets to facilitating tabulation in order to meet the objectives of the study. It may be noted here that information was collected initially in local units.

## 6. DESCRIPTION OF THE STUDY

This chapter presents a brief description of the study area. Knowledge of the study area is very essential to understand the location, physical feature and topology, soil type, temperature, rainfall, agricultural and economic condition, population, education and other socioeconomic infrastructure available in the area. This chapter aims at present the above-mentioned characteristics of the study area.

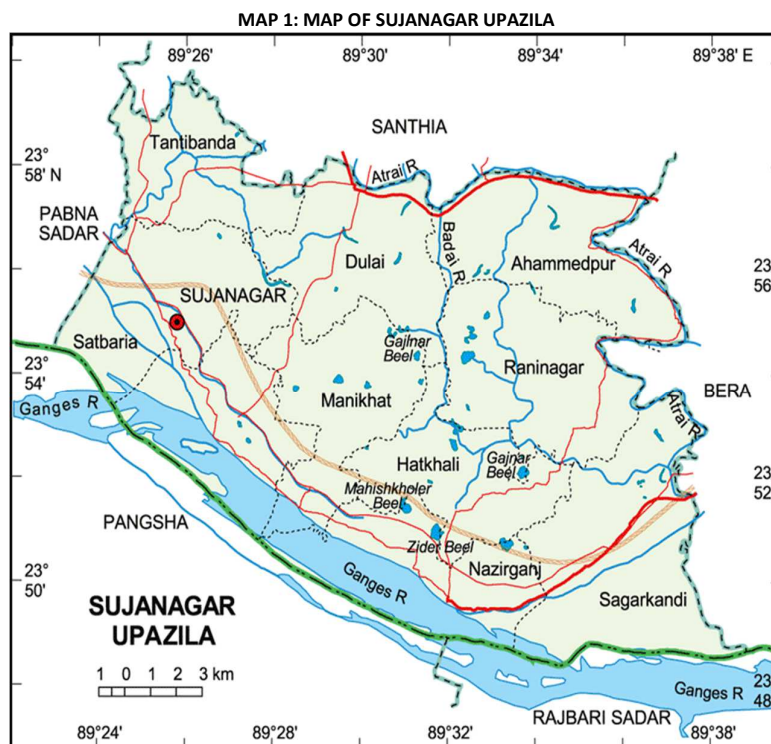
### 6.1 LOCATION

The study was conducted on five villages namely, Sadlapur, Vitbila, Raipur, khetupara, Bonkola under Sujanagar Upozilla in the district of Pabna. The selected villages are under the union council of Manikhat of the Sujanagar Upazilla.

Pabna district is bounded by Natore and Sirajganj districts on the north, Rajbari and Kustia districts on the south, Manikganj and Sirajganj districts on the east, Ganges River and Kustia districts on the west. Sujanagar Upazilla is situated 24 Km south-west to the district head quarter. It is bounded by santhia upazila on the north, rajbari sadar and pangsha upazilas on the south, bera upazila on the east, Pangsha and pabna sadar upazilas on the west. Main rivers are padma and atrain; noted depressions are Gajna Beel and Gandahasti Beel. The location of the study area is shown in Maps 4.2.1

### 6.2 MAP OF SUJANAGAR UPAZILA

Soils of the study area are silt loams, silt clay loams and heavy clays. General soil types predominately include Calcareous dark and Calcareous Brown Floodplain soils. Organic content is low. General fertility level is medium. The pH of topsoil ranges from 6.0 to 7.5 and organic matters of topsoil range from 0.8 percent to 2.1 percent (BBS 2010).



### 6.3 PHYSICAL FEATURES, TOPOGRAPHY AND SOIL TYPE

The study area belongs to the agro-ecological Zones of High Ganges River Floodplain and Low Ganges River Flood Plain. Main rivers are padma and atrain; noted depressions are Gajna Beel and Gandahasti Beel is founded in the study area.

### 6.4 AREA, POPULATION AND HOUSEHOLD

Total area of Pabna districts is 2371.50 km<sup>2</sup> of which 122.13 km<sup>2</sup> is riverine and .03 km<sup>2</sup> is under forest. Effective land area of Sujanagar upazila is 324 km<sup>2</sup>, riverine area is 2.28 km<sup>2</sup>. The Upazila cover 9.23 percent of Pabna district (BBS 2010).

The number of households in Pabna district was 448000, which was 1.68 percent of total households of total household of the country. The density of population was 910 per km<sup>2</sup>. The percentage of male and female was 51.17 and 48.83 respectively. However, number of households in Sujanagar Upazila was 49000 and total population was 214132 (BBS 2010).

### 6.5 CLIMATE

Yield of onion largely depends upon the temperature, humidity, day length and rainfall. So it is very important to know the climatic condition of the study area. The district is remarkable for its high temperature, Humidity and coldness. Maximum and minimum mean temperature during winter varies from 24.40C to 10.60C. During the summer maximum and minimum mean temperature varies from 36.70C to 25.30C. The dry winter season starts from October and continue up to march. Summer comes from April and continues up to June. The district average rainfall data shows that it was 1872 mm in 2010. Heavy rainfall occurs during monsoon while the rainfall is the lowest in December and January. Humidity is around 79 percent in January and 88 percent in July (BBS 2010).

### 6.6 AGRICULTURE AND ECONOMIC CONDITION

Agriculture of the selected villages was mainly based on crop production. The main crops of the study area were rice of different varieties, spices, pulses, jute, etc. moreover, different kind of fruits and vegetables are grown in the study area. Varieties of fish are caught from rivers, beels and paddy fields during the rainy season. Total area under the onion production in the Pabna district is 36040 ha in which 7750 ha in Sujanagr Upazila (DAE 2011).

### 6.7 MAIN OCCUPATION

Agricultural is the main source of income of the people of the study area. A small number of people were engaged in service, business, different government organization and NGOs. The main occupation of the landless farmers was wage labor, rickshaw pulling, petty business, etc. in Sujanagar Upazila 48.63 percent people was engaged in agricultural. While the 35 percent of the Pabna district.

## 7. MARKETING CHANNELS AND INTERMEDIARIES INVOLVED IN THE ONION MARKETING

Marketing channels have traditionally been viewed as a bridge between producers and users. However, this perspective fails to capture the complex network of relationships that facilitate marketing flows: the movement of goods, service, information, and so forth between channel members. The intermediaries involved in the vegetable marketing chain from producer to consumer are the Farias, Beparis, Arathdars, Wholesalers, and Retailers. Marketing and distribution were inextricably intertwined at the beginning of the 20th century.

**7.1 FARIA**

Farias are petty traders who buy onion from producers in the village or in the local market and sell them to Beparis, or sometimes directly to local consumers. Farias conduct their business independently, and most are self-financed. They normally do not have a permanent shop in the market, and they have no permanent staff. About half have been engaged in onion trading for more than 10 years. About half are seasonal traders; the rest do business throughout the year. Some Farias also deal in other commodities, such as jute or paddy. None of them is reported to offer credit.

**7.2 BEPARI**

Beparis are professional traders who buy goods from producers or Farias at the local markets, ship their consignments to urban wholesale markets and sell to retailers through commission agents. Most Beparis are independently organized and self-financed. They have no permanent shops or staff, but they do hire casual labor to perform a variety of marketing functions. Most Beparis have more than five years' experience in the onion business, and are involved in onion trading throughout the year; some also deal in other agricultural commodities. Cash sales or purchases are very common at this stage of the marketing channel. There exists strong competition among Beparis, and entry into this type of business has few barriers. As a result, Beparis cannot make excessive profits.

**7.3 ARATHDAR**

Arathdars are commission agents who operate from a permanent base (shop or other establishment). Most Arathdars are independently organized and self-financed. They employ both day (or monthly) laborers and other staff to perform various functions, and many employ a few permanent staff. Both licensed and unlicensed Arathdars are found in the wholesale markets. Arathdars charge commissions from Beparis and retailers; these commissions differ according to the vegetable. Arathdars often advance loans to Beparis (on condition that the Bepari sell his onion to the Arathdar) and provide shelter and occasional meals to Beparis. Competition at this stage is comparatively less and there are major barriers to entry (such as limited space in the market); as a result, Arathdars can make excessive profits.

**7.4 WHOLESALER**

Wholesaler buys onion from Beparis through Arathdars and sells them to retailers or consumers. They operate independently and manage their own capital; sometimes they borrow money from Arathdars. Wholesalers have no permanent staff and work on a cash basis. They do not have shops, but instead not like to wait a long time before selling their vegetables dispose of their stock to the Wholesaler at the Arath centers.

**7.5 RETAILER**

Retailers, the last link in the marketing channel, buy vegetables from Beparis through Arathdars and sell them to consumers. Most retailers are independently organized and have a permanent shop in the market, although some, particularly in low-income areas, have no shop, but use the open marketplace. Most retailers are self-financed, but sometimes borrow money from friends and relatives. Some big retailers in high-income areas employ one or two people. In high-income localities, scarcity of space to set up a shop are an important barrier to entry, whereas in low-income areas, people who want to sell onion can simply sit in the open marketplace. Cash sales are very common in high-income areas, but in low-income areas retailers often sell vegetables on credit. Retailers sometimes make credit purchases from Beparis at Arath centers.

**7.6 DIFFERENT MARKETING CHANNELS OF ONION**

The following channels are investigated in detail in different studies discussed in the following sections:

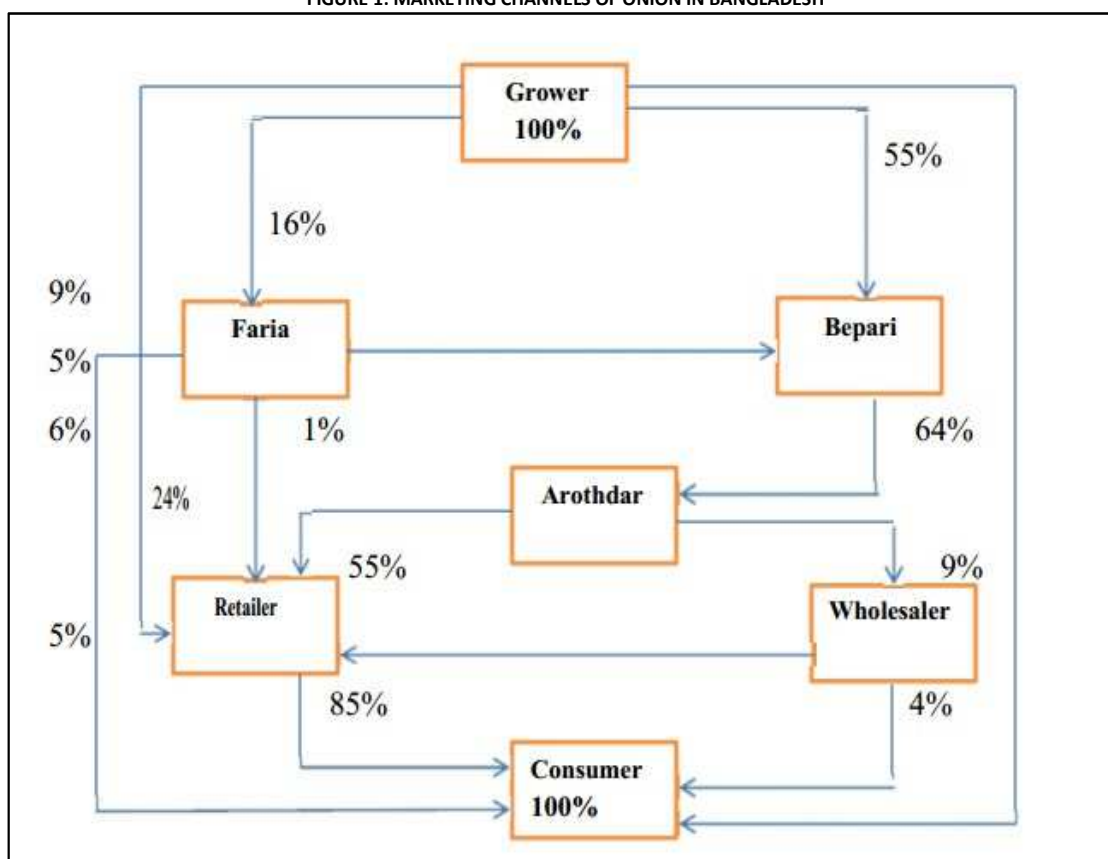
**TABLE 1: DIFFERENT MARKETING CHANNELS INVOLVED IN THE MARKETING OF ONION**

Channel-1	Channel-2	Channel-3	Channel-4	Channel-5	Channel-6
Producer ↓ Consumer	Producer ↓ Retailer ↓ Consumer	Producer ↓ Bepari ↓ Arathdar ↓ Retailer ↓ Consumer	Producer ↓ Bepari ↓ Paiker ↓ Arathdar ↓ Retailer ↓ Consumer	Producer ↓ Faria ↓ Ratailer ↓ Consumer	Producer ↓ Faria ↓ Bepari ↓ Arathdar ↓ Retailer ↓ Consumer

**7.7 MARKETING CHANNELS FOR ONION IN BANGLADESH**

In the channel of onion marketing in Bangladesh the product moves from the producers-sellers to ultimate consumers through a number of market intermediaries.

FIGURE 1: MARKETING CHANNELS OF ONION IN BANGLADESH



Source: Field survey (2012)

### 7.8 BUYING AND SELLING OF ONION

Buying and selling are the functions of exchange. Percentage of onion transaction by farmers and intermediaries at different levels are shown in table.

TABLE 2: BUYING OF ONION BY DIFFERENT MARKET INTERMEDIARIES (Sold at %)

Intermediaries	Producer	Faria	Bepari	Arathdar	Wholesaler	Retailer
Producer	100	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....
Faria	66.67	33.33	.....	.....	.....	.....
Bepari	12.5	25.00	62.50	.....	.....	.....
Arathdar	.....	11.11	44.44	44.45	.....	.....
Wholesaler	54.29	31.42	.....	.....	14.29	.....
Retailer	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....

Source: Field survey (2012)

### 8. CONCLUSION

Onion is extensively cultivated species in sujanagar upazilla of pabna district. However, onion production was more profitable than any other spices production. The management practice of onion enterprise in the study area was not found efficient enough. The marketing channel of onion is so long. The farmers don't get the highest margin. Long marketing channel increase the product damage.

The well planned management training and the marketing practice in accordance to with their problems, need, goals, and resource base can lead to viable marketing practice and sustainable income from the onion production.

### 9. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

1. The study was restricted to one upazilla where onion production was concentrated. The study might be meaningful results if it covered a number of upazilla producing potatoes.
2. Due to shortage of time the study could not cover wide side areas for collecting necessary information.
3. Some written records were maintained by the literate respondents, but maximum respondents had no written document. Therefore, the researcher had to depend solely on the memory of the respondents.
4. Respondents were very busy. A study that encloses interview of 30 samples cannot conclude anything accurately and as such, it was based on miss information.

### 10. RECOMMENDATIONS

The following suggestions are put forward with a view to improve the onion production as well as the existing marketing system of onion in the study areas.

- Operating capital is a problem for the resource poor farmers of the study area. Institutional credit program should be launched aiming at particularly the small and medium farmers. The commercial bank should be encouraged to provide loans at a low interest rate to enable farmers to operate their farming on commercial basis.
- Crop incurrence is new to Bangladesh. It was not experienced in study area. Farmers opined that if crop insurance could be executed they could be relieved from heavy loss due to natural climates.
- To avoid price fluctuation, support price should be ensured to the farmers.
- Market cost is high because of inadequate information, infrastructure, high price risk etc.

- So steps should be taken to ensure – fair price, quality of product, floor price, and the stability of production.
- Storage facilities and suitable market infrastructure should be improved at primary and secondary markets by establishing public and private go-downs and warehouse.
- Development of transportation system is essential for the improvement of trading and reducing cost of onion.

Moreover, a large number of people were involved in the production and marketing of onion. So, the farmers and intermediaries could be more benefited financially if production and marketing of onion were well expanded.

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