

# SUCCESS STORY

## Intercropping Takes Root

**CSISA-MI demonstrated 'intercropping' returns cultivation cost to farmers - ahead of harvesting the main crop.**



Photo: TARA LEUNG/CSISA-MI

**“Next season we’ll have intercrop in 1.34 hectares of land.”**

- *Jasim, son of farmer Abder Ali Biswas, Jessore Sadar Upazila.*

Farmers of Jessore Sadar Upazila are doing something different this season. Intercrop cultivation, beneficial for crop yields brings extra money during the lean period of cultivation. Peas, a highly nutritious food for humans are new to the people of Gobila village in Sadar Upazila. The crop, just introduced this dry season, is now cultivated along with maize on around 0.21 hectares of land of six farmers in the upazila. The price of the produce is good enough for farmers to cover their cultivation cost before harvesting maize – the main crop.

Intercrop cultivation, researched and promoted by the USAID-funded CSISA-MI project, part of President Obama's Feed the Future (FtF) Campaign, is demonstrated in local communities by the International Maize and Wheat Improvement Centre (CIMMYT). Intercropping is the practice of growing two or more crops in proximity. The system mostly aims to produce a greater yield on a given piece of land by making use of resources that would otherwise not be utilized by a single crop. Strategies vary depending on soil, climate, crops, and varieties. Peas and maize are a particularly good combination as they don't compete with each other for sunlight, nutrients, or space.

Until now, farmers like Abder Ali Biswas, 55, of Gobila village cultivated rice only. This dry season, two farmers including him in his village are growing maize intercropped with peas on 0.15 hectares of land. Maize is comparatively a new crop in the area. Last year, one of the farmers cultivated maize for the first time in Gobila. The yield rate was 11,477 kilograms per hectare of land, shared Mr. Biswas's son Jashim Uddin, who influenced his father to explore the CSIS-MI promoted technologies. Maize is more profitable than rice; although the market price is the same, maize yield per hectare is double. Intercropping further increases income by decreasing the cost of cultivation. For instance, in January, Mr. Biswas harvested 560 kilograms of peas per hectare of land. The yield was sold at 26881 taka (US \$359) per metric ton which was more than 60% of his total cultivation cost.

Now, as Mr. Biswas's income is secured and farming became more cost-effective for him, his son Jasim - who is keen in using agricultural technology - plans to pursue his dream of becoming an government official which might lead him to contribute on the whole in the agriculture sector of the country.