

# strawberry FIELDS

When auto rickshaw driver, Faruq watched a television program about the cultivation of strawberries, he felt inspired. Very quickly he sourced information from the local Caritas and set to work. His success, in a country where strawberries are relatively unknown, is extraordinary.



FARUQ, 29, IS from Rangunia Upazila in Chittagong, southeast Bangladesh. He is a great example of how the international Caritas network can assist people from poor and marginalised areas.

In Faruq's village and surrounding areas, the most regular crop cultivated is tobacco. So the idea of growing strawberries was entirely new to the area. Faruq decided his first step was to speak with Caritas Bangladesh who work closely with the local agricultural office.

In 2012, Faruq became a member of Caritas Bangladesh's livelihood program which trains small farmers and landholders in sustainable agriculture and organic farming. The Natural Resources Management Project (NRMP), which is funded by Caritas Australia and AusAID, was exactly what he needed to move forward on his idea.

Very quickly Faruq gathered as much knowledge as he could on strawberry

**Strawberries from Faruq's farm have been very well received and there is a high demand for his produce in the markets of Chittagong city and Rangunia.**

farming, and with the support of the program, set to work.

As he didn't have access to a sufficient amount of land for the commercial production of strawberries, Faruq borrowed funds to acquire more land and was also given a small Caritas grant to move forward.

He told us, "Previously we used to cultivate tobacco on our land. We always used chemical fertiliser and pesticides for cultivation. With the support of Caritas, it has been possible to cultivate strawberries instead of tobacco. Caritas also assisted in the preparation of organic fertiliser and regularly followed up with me."

Strawberries from Faruq's farm have been very well received and there is a high demand for his produce in the markets of Chittagong city and Rangunia.

The income he is earning is helping him to pay off the loan for the land; he can also afford better healthcare and more nutritious food – for him and his immediate family.

In July this year, Caritas Bangladesh received first prize in organic production at an agricultural fair organised by the Agricultural Department of Rangunia, and Faruq received first prize for strawberry cultivation.

The next step for this strawberry farmer is to cultivate his crop on a large scale in Rangunia next season where most of the farmers grow tobacco. Faruq believes it is a new learning in his life and that many farmers have asked him to teach them about growing strawberries.

Faruq is excited about the future and his new life path.



In July this year, Caritas Bangladesh received first prize in organic production at an agricultural fair and Faruq (above, at right) received first prize for strawberry cultivation.

## ACT

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