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New quality control lab for animal products set to open in January

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The new quality control laboratory for meat and animal product testing in Savar **Mehedi Hasan/Dhaka Tribune**

The lab is expected to go into operation in January 2020

With the rise of growing consumer demand – both domestic and international – for livestock and animal products, the supply has increased accordingly, but concerns over whether they meet the rigorous standards for consumption has risen as well.

In response, the Ministry of Fisheries and Livestock has initiated a Tk10,560 crore project, titled “Establishment of Quality Control Laboratory for Livestock Inputs and its Food Products (EQCLIFP),” to ensure quality meat and meat products for consumption and trade.

Under the project, a quality control lab is being set up in Savar on 1.64 acres of land. The six-storey facility will house 230 equipment for meat and animal product testing, according to Raisul Alam Mandal, a secretary with the ministry.

Project Director Dr Mostofa Kamal said the lab would be the national authority responsible for the appropriate implementation of analytical tools and techniques for quality control of livestock products, taking into account their nutritional, biological, chemical qualities.

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Dr Kamal said the lab could play a leading role in ensuring a harmonized approach between district hospitals, field laboratories, various industries, and other stakeholders.

The lab currently has 10 scientists, and will take on 10 more. Most of the equipment, which cost TK53 crore, have been purchased from the US, Japan and Germany.

Potentially hazardous residues and contaminants are vigorously scrutinized, and strict authorization procedures are in place for new additives and crops for feed and food production, disease investigation, and food safety.

Abu Sayeed Md Abdul Hannan, the project's chief scientific officer, said: "The project aims to ensure uniform detection, quantification and authorization procedures, particularly in areas where there is a need for precise analytical and diagnostic results. Our main objective is to contribute to a high quality and uniformity of results obtained in the various official feed control and disease investigating laboratories all over the world."

He also said that diseases and harmful chemical could enter the country through imported veterinary products. In addition, certifications can help domestic producers export, further stressing the need for quality control to prevent diseases and boost the sector.

Department of Livestock Services (DLS) Assistant Director (Training) Dr Pallab Dutta said the lab will also be another avenue to generate revenue by charging for tests and certifications. The rates will be fixed by the Steering Committee of the ministry.

The DLS has 64 district veterinary hospitals, seven field disease investigation laboratory, one central disease investigation laboratory, a nutrition section, a public health section, and a quality control section. However, their scope is limited to routine analysis and do not meet the rigorous global standards.

The Bangladesh Standards and Testing Institution (BSTI) has the provision to certify 59 food items including milk and milk products, but they have no provision to certify meat and egg products.

The new quality control lab is expected to take on that role in order to help exports of meat and meat products.

DLS Director General Hiresh Ranjan Bhowmik said the quality control lab can easily facilitate certifications from the World Organization for Animal Health and the World Trade Organization for exports.

Animal nutrition expert Dr ABM Khaleduzzaman, also assistant director (Farming) at the DLS, said: "If the imported and domestically produced poultry and livestock products are of low quality, it will eventually lead to low production and risk of diseases. So, we must have national standards, a regulatory body, a quality control laboratory and skilled manpower."

He noted that a lack of quality control has created lower growth in national livestock production.

Currently, there are 226 registered feed companies which cater to 90% of the national demand, said Bangladesh Poultry Industries Central Council President Mosiur Rahman.

This sector contributes 1.73% to the overall GDP. In an agriculture-based economy, livestock plays vital role in employment generation, poverty reduction among rural community, food security and food safety.

Currently however, food safety and quality are the top concerns of the consumers.

As quality feed and feed additives remain the primary challenge for increasing growth of livestock and its products, DLS Assistant Director Mojibor Rahman said: "Locally available feed ingredients are not sufficient for high growth of livestock population, so the sector depends on artificial feeds, which may be contaminated by chemical or biological hazards like tannery waste, heavy metals and toxins. Furthermore, nutrient concentrations are not provided according to animal requirements in these feeds. On the other hand, microorganisms and harmful chemical and biological ingredients could enter the country through imported animals and animal products."

"The Fish and Animal Feed Act 2010 and Animal Feed Rules 2013, emphasize on quality control of animal feed, processing, export and import of animal and animal products. The Food Safety Act 2013 also emphasizes quality control of animal originated food and food products," Bangladesh Food Safety Authority (BFSA) Chairman Mohammad Mahfuzul Hoque said.

What the lab will do

- Promote livestock production through quality control of livestock inputs
- Quality control of livestock feed and feed additives
- Quality control of drugs, hormones and residues
- Certify private sector for quality production of animal feed and other veterinary inputs

- Provide certificate to export and import quality animals and animal products
- PTo create mass awareness about the quality of animal feeds

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