

THE BYETS PRESS

NOVEMBER 2025 | VOLUME VIII



Advancing Skills in Expanding Opportunities in Diversified Jute Sector

Bangladesh Jute Mills Association (BJMA) and Swisscontact Bangladesh join hands by signing a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to strengthen skills development within the country's diversified jute sector. The event was attended by Md. Abul Hossain, Chairman of BJMA, alongside special guest Md. Hasen Ali, Director of BJMA and representative of Hasen Jute Industries Ltd., and Ishrat Fatema, Deputy Country Director of Swisscontact Bangladesh, together with officials from Swisscontact, BJMA, and private-sector stakeholders, all of whom highlighted the transformative potential of this partnership.

The collaboration aims to enhance the technical and entrepreneurial capacities of producer-entrepreneurs engaged in manufacturing diversified jute products, which are environmentally friendly alternatives to synthetic materials that meet growing global demand for sustainable consumer goods. Through a series of training initiatives, the partnership will support young entrepreneurs, particularly women, to access opportunities in both domestic and international markets.

Swisscontact will facilitate conducting training needs assessments, developing training modules, and organising Training of Trainers (ToT) programmes to build a pool of master trainers within BJMA. These trainers will subsequently deliver skills training to at least 100 entrepreneurs producing diversified jute goods. With its extensive network of 240 member mills, BJMA will facilitate entrepreneur participation, provide training facilities, and support the continuity of the initiatives. By developing a more skilled workforce and nurturing emerging entrepreneurs, this collaboration is expected to strengthen human resources across the jute sector and help position it as a driver of sustainable economic growth.

Swisscontact Extends Support to SMEs in Bangladesh's Agro-Processing Industry

BYETS project of Swisscontact has expanded its intervention area to support skills training in Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in Bangladesh's agro-processing (AP) industry. This strategic move follows the successful implementation of its Workplace-Based Training (WBT) model in eight leading factories and reflects the project's commitment to making skills development more inclusive, sustainable, and responsive to the diverse needs of the sector.

At its core, Swisscontact works to enhance workforce productivity and build the capacity of Bangladesh's AP sector to meet global compliance standards for export. The project's WBT model is a pioneering approach in a sector that has traditionally lacked structured or formal training systems. The journey began with a comprehensive assessment to understand the needs and priorities of private sector stakeholders. In collaboration with international and national experts, the project then developed a series of tailored training modules to address identified gaps.

Initially, these modules were piloted in established fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) factories, organisations with the infrastructure, resources, and readiness to trial and refine the WBT model. Feedback from these early implementations allowed BYETS to adapt and optimise its approach, ensuring that the training was not only technically sound but also practical, relevant, and scalable.



This expansion reflects a broader recognition that SMEs, despite being integral to innovation, job creation, and decentralised economic growth, are often overlooked in national workforce planning. Many operate with limited awareness of regulatory frameworks, minimal integration into global supply chains, and scarce access to skilled labour. Yet they are also more geographically dispersed, making them accessible to rural and peri-urban youth who might not otherwise benefit from formal industrial employment opportunities.

By focusing on SMEs, Swisscontact is addressing both sides of the labour market equation. On the supply side, it equips young people with practical, industry-relevant skills. On the demand side, it strengthens SMEs' organisational capacity, improves their understanding of compliance, and links them to new markets. Hence, the expansion into SMEs within the AP industry marks a significant milestone for the initiative. By integrating workforce training with enterprise support, the project is developing conditions where skilled youth and growth-oriented SMEs can connect for mutual benefit.

Why SMEs?

With the model now proven in large enterprises, BYETS is extending its reach to SMEs, specifically those in the AP industry, such as Star Line Food Products LTD, Rahul Group, Shelaidah Dairy, Mart Promoters, Vegan Agro Limited, and S&B Nice Foods Valley Limited. While SMEs are an essential part of Bangladesh's economy, many face considerable constraints, including limited technical knowledge, a shortage of skilled manpower, and a lack of readiness to access international markets. By offering workplace-based training tailored to their context, Swisscontact is enabling these businesses to improve productivity, achieve compliance, and connect with cross-border opportunities.



Swisscontact's BYETS Project Celebrates the World Day for Decent Work 2025 with Agro-Processing Factories

BYETS commemorates the World Day of Decent Work on October 7, 2025, with AP factories including City Edible Oil Industry Limited, Rupshi Foods Limited, IFAD Multi Products Ltd., Shabnam Vegetable Oil Industries Limited, Super Oil Refinery Ltd., Olympic Industries Limited, Akij Bakers Ltd., and Square Food & Beverage Ltd. During the three-day capacity development workshop- a daylong session on Labour Rights and Decent Work was conducted to highlight the global observance of the World Day for Decent Work. Discussions covered key aspects, including occupational safety and health (OSH), the prevention of child and forced labour, effective grievance redress mechanisms (GRM), provisions on wages, working hours, and leave, as well as measures to prevent violence and harassment. A special session was conducted to create a platform for senior management from participating industries to share their organisations' best practices for ensuring workplace wellbeing. The interactive discussions encouraged participants to identify practical areas for improvement, such as establishing effective workers' participation committees, forming anti-harassment committees, and streamlining grievance redress processes at their respective factories.

Swisscontact Motivates Readymade Garments and Agro-Processing Industries in Bangladesh to Build Safer, Fairer, and Greener Workplaces

A total of 48 management officials from 24 readymade garment (RMG) factories and 16 management officials from eight AP industries participated in a professional development workshop on Workplace Wellbeing: Equality, Rights & Green Responsibility. The three-day, sector-specific workshops were designed to promote a culture of fairness, safety, and environmental awareness within Bangladesh's RMG and AP sectors. The sessions covered key themes such as Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI), which emphasised equal opportunities and inclusive practices for all workers. The Labour Rights and Decent Work (LRDW) session focused on enhancing workplace culture and ensuring safety standards, while the Environmental Responsibility (ER) session encouraged industries to adopt sustainable and climate-conscious practices in their daily operations.



Empowering Women Through Skills and Opportunity



The BYETS project of Swisscontact participated in HERizon Fest: Celebrating Women, Skills & Employment

A two-day programme hosted by the National Skills Development Authority (NSDA) and the ADVANTAGE project of GIZ

The event concluded with the thought that empowering women through skills is not just a development goal, it is a national imperative.



Through engaging dialogues, BYETS showcased its inclusive working approach and intervention areas aimed at enhancing employability for young and disadvantaged women in Bangladesh.

BYETS represented Swisscontact in the vibrant HERizon Fest: Celebrating Women, Skills & Employment event, held on October 6-7, 2025, demonstrating how strategic investments in skills development can create lasting change for women in Bangladesh. The event brought together government officials, private sector leaders, civil society, and development partners. It served as a platform to share best practices, create dialogue, and co-create solutions for inclusive employment.

Swisscontact's Agro-Processing Global Gateway Expo 2025 Aids SMEs in Improving Trade and Export Readiness

The Agro-Processing Global Gateway Expo 2025 was a three-day event held from May 8 to 10, 2025. The Expo brought together nearly 30 promising SMEs in the AP industry.

Agro-Processing Global Gateway Expo 2025 was visited by



6000+

Visitors came to the Expo

1100+

Export-focused attendees

549

Attended the seminars at the Expo

BYETS conducted a study with **21** of the participating businesses to assess how the expo influenced their market access, business linkages, and readiness for future growth. The findings highlighted several areas where SMEs experienced tangible benefits, such as-

Strengthening Market Connections

One of the most significant impacts of the expo was the creation of new business linkages.

- **42%** firms established national and international buyer connections, providing them with new market opportunities.
- **26%** companies reported gaining B2C sales, supporting their commercial visibility and customer outreach.
- **32%** SMEs reported to have better marketing exposure and noted that the platform effectively boosted their brand presence.

RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE PARTICIPANTS



Improve Export Readiness

Future events should be designed to specifically improve export readiness among SMEs.



Facilitate Compliance Training

There is a high demand for compliance-related training among the SMEs.



Develop a Linkage Platform

Events should develop a platform or establish mechanisms to enhance the linkage between buyers, suppliers, and distributors.