

# THE BYETS PRESS

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## ROUNDTABLE HIGHLIGHTS ROLE OF SKILLS IN MAKING AGRO-PROCESSING SMES EXPORT READY

The Building Youth Employability Through Skills (BYETS) project, in collaboration with The Daily Star, held its third roundtable discussion on June 26, 2025, which focused on “Export Readiness of Agro-Processing SMEs through Skills Development”. The event was moderated by Ananya Raihan, Chairperson of iSocial Limited, and brought together a wide range of stakeholders. Discussants included representatives from the Bangladesh Agro-Processors' Association (BAPA), the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, the Embassy of Sweden, Australian High Commission, the International Labour Organization (ILO), the European Union Chamber of Commerce in Bangladesh, agro-processing factories, and other private sector partners. The discussion centred on how targeted, market-responsive skills development can help agro-processing (AP) small and medium enterprises (SMEs) become export-ready.

The roundtable provided a platform for open dialogue, with participants agreeing on the importance of skills development, existing development bottlenecks, compliance readiness, and greater coordination between public and private sector actors to help agro-processing SMEs reach international markets.





## AGRO-PROCESSING GLOBAL GATEWAY EXPO 2025: A STEP TOWARDS TRADE AND EXPORT READINESS FOR SMES

The inauguration of the “Agro-Processing Global Gateway” Expo 2025 marked a significant milestone for the Building Youth Employability Through Skills (BYETS) project, implemented by Swisscontact and supported by the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, and organised in collaboration with CEMS Bangladesh. Held over three days, from 8 to 10 May 2025, the Expo brought together nearly 30 promising small and medium-sized agro-processing enterprises (SMEs), along with national and international traders, technology providers, and innovators. The event served as a business-to-business (B2B) platform for networking, knowledge exchange, and forging new partnerships across the global agro-processing value chain.

The event was officially inaugurated in the presence of esteemed guests including His Excellency Thijs Woudstra, Deputy Head of Mission, Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands; Md. Abul Hashem, President of the Bangladesh Agro-Processors' Association (BAPA); Nuria Lopez, Chairperson of the European Union Chamber of Commerce in Bangladesh (EuroCham); Mahbub Baset, COO of IFAD Multi Products Limited; Ishrat Fatema, Deputy Country Director of Swisscontact Bangladesh; and Meherun N. Islam, Group Managing Director of CEMS Global USA and Asia Pacific.



### Agro-Processing Global Gateway Expo 2025 provided platform for

**57**

Agro-processing companies who actively participated including-

**13**

International Agro-Processing firms and

**5**

of these exhibitors have existing affiliation with Dutch organisations



## 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

The Expo was attended by exporters, importers, manufacturers, distributors, suppliers, wholesalers, and representatives from various associations within the agro-processing (AP) industry. While most visitors attended to discover new products and services, others aimed to network and establish connections with potential manufacturers or meet existing suppliers to place orders.

Although BYETS primarily focuses on skills development, its engagement in this Expo signals a strategic shift towards trade facilitation. The project recognises that skill-building alone is not enough—economic transformation requires linking skilled individuals to market opportunities.

As part of this vision, three engaging seminars were held during the event to address pressing challenges and emerging opportunities in the AP sector. These seminars initiated discussions among key stakeholders—local businesses, government and association representatives, and global partners spanning embassies, trade missions, and international corporations.

### The series of three seminars held during the event were titled:



**Strengthening Agro-Processing SMEs: Creating a Business-Friendly Environment for Growth and Export**



**Export Opportunities in Unconventional Markets for Bangladeshi SMEs**



**Unlocking Bangladesh's Export Potential in the Agro-Processing Sector**

The “Agro-Processing Global Gateway” Expo 2025 concluded with a strong sense of purpose: that the time is right for Bangladesh to scale up its AP exports while meeting national needs—and to do so inclusively. The Expo served as more than just a platform for showcasing products; it became a space for shaping ideas, building alliances, and laying the groundwork for systemic reform. By combining skill development with trade facilitation, the BYETS project is helping SMEs transition from being market-ready to market-accessible. With the right investments, policy reforms, and inclusive strategies, Bangladesh can position itself as a competitive international player in processed goods.

### Achievements of the Expo:

- Hundreds of business leads and trade inquiries were generated.
- Seminar sessions produced actionable policy recommendations and valuable market insights.
- SMEs gained visibility, practical tools, and renewed momentum to scale up for export.

### Looking Forward:

- The event underscored the importance of integrating skills, innovation, and market access.
- Participating stakeholders expressed interest in making the Gateway an annual event.
- Initial dialogue has begun on strengthening local value chain integration and advancing investment readiness.





## BYETS SPECIAL INTERVENTIONS

### BYETS CONTINUE RESIDENTIAL ICT TRAINING FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

BYETS project has successfully completed the second batch of its five-month residential ICT training for Persons with Disabilities (PwDs), in partnership with the Centre for the Rehabilitation of the Paralysed (CRP) at its Manikganj training centre. This initiative aims to equip young PwDs with the necessary skills to enhance their employability. The curriculum covers a range of subjects, including Microsoft Office applications and digital marketing, tailored to suit the unique needs of the participants. A total of 10 PwD trainees have enrolled in this residential course. Alongside accommodation, CRP also offers therapy sessions and psychological counselling, supporting both the physical and mental well-being of the participants. This special intervention reflects BYETS project's commitment to empowering socially excluded individuals by helping them overcome mobility barriers and access meaningful income opportunities through home-based freelancing.



### BYETS SUPPORTS 650 ICT GRADUATES WITH ENTREPRENEURSHIP TRAINING

The BYETS project has partnered with Truvalu and Inspira Advisory and Consulting Ltd. to provide entrepreneurship training to 650 ICT graduates across Dhaka, Chattogram, Khulna, and Rajshahi. This initiative equips graduates with practical skills to start and run their own businesses, covering diverse topics like business registration, team building, finance, accounting and marketing. Graduates from BYETS project's ICT training programs in partnered training centres applied to join the boot camp. From them, 650 promising individuals—many of whom were already running micro-businesses—were selected for the programme. Simultaneously, these Business Development Service (BDS) providers are also strengthening the capacity of 14 partner training centres to offer ongoing entrepreneurship support, especially in rural and peri-urban areas. This approach helps ensure a sustainable model for delivering business training beyond the project's lifetime, opening new opportunities for young entrepreneurs across Bangladesh.