

Grain storage facilities in the country are adequate. Storage capacity in foodgrain silos near major centres is 225,000 tons while 12 central supply depots and 320 local supply depots around the country can hold another 800,000 tons. This capacity is sufficient to handle food aid wheat stocks as well as locally procured rice.

The Chittagong port has a 100,000 ton bulk storage capacity for grain in one modern silo. It also has a covered storage space for 120,000 tons of cargo, part of which can be used for grain in bags. Shoals at the mouth of the river restrict the size of vessels which can enter the port. Average size ships must be lightered in an outer anchorage about two miles from the river mouth. Super-tankers must off-load onto lighters at a distance of up to fifty miles from the port. The lightering ships must in turn off-load onto mini-bulkers to get the cargo into port. This lightering system provides some opportunity for leakages. The Government of Bangladesh is aware of, and concerned about, this problem and is taking steps to police the system. However, for this to be effective additional resources such as patrol boats and fuel, are required.

From the port, grain is moved into the silo. This silo has modern equipment, much of which, however, is quickly wearing out because of the large volumes of grain being handled. From this point the grain is moved to government storage facilities throughout the country. Transportation to these storage facilities presents the second area for leakages. Much of the grain is moved by hand at various points along the system by labourers making a minimum subsistence wage. As explained to us by one government official, it is extremely difficult to stop these labourers from taking a little extra grain to feed their families.