

**AN ASSESSMENT OF SOCIO-ECONOMIC IMPACTS OF
THAMBUTTEGAMA DEDICATED ECONOMIC CENTER (TDEC)**

S.P.C.M. Sudasinghe¹ and Y.M. Wickramasinghe¹

¹Department of Agricultural Systems, Faculty of Agriculture, Rajarata University of Sri Lanka, Anuradhapura, Sri Lanka.

Dedicated Economic Centers (DEC) are the latest agricultural marketing culture introduced by the government to promote rural agricultural marketing in Sri Lanka. Thambuttegama Dedicated Economic Center (TDEC) is one DEC located in the system 'H' of Mahaweli. Though there are some visual impacts of the TDEC, they are not yet being evaluated.

This study attempts to quantify socio-economic benefits in five selected Divisional secretariat areas in the system 'H' of Mahaweli. A randomly selected sample of one hundred respondents was interviewed. Three different types of pre-tested questionnaires were used to gather relevant data. Qualitative and quantitative comparisons of data from 2004 and 2008 were done during the data analysis.

The results indicate that, a farmer could save a total amount of Rs 302,712.57 per annum. This figure includes an average financial gain of 18.9% due to reduced transport cost (per journey), 46.8% from time saved (per journey) 2.6% from wastage reduction of the produce (per journey), and 5.6% due to increase of business volume. Buyer could save a total amount of Rs 677,791.80 per annum including an average financial gain of 8.8 % due to reduced transport cost (per journey), 38.5% from time saved (per journey), 3.5% from reduced wastage (per visit) and 4% due to increased volume purchased (per market visit). A twenty percent increase in annual business volume was observed in outside businesses surrounded by the TDEC. Management service, cleaning service, stall owners, helpers, porters, security service, canteen and some banks have been identified as direct employment opportunities made by the TDEC.

It is clear that the whole socio- economic benefits sprung out of the TDEC have directly affected the rural agricultural development as well as development of national economy in Sri Lanka.

Key words: Agricultural marketing culture, Dedicated Economic Center, Rural agricultural development, Socio- Economic impacts