

FACTORS AFFECTING ON WILLINGNESS TO PURCHASE ORGANIC FOODS: A CASE STUDY IN BATTICALOA DISTRICT, SRI LANKA

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Organic food consumption is increasing among Sri Lankan consumers from the recent past as they are more conscious on food safety, health and environment along with nutritive value, taste, freshness and appearance of the food they consume. This study was conducted to determine factors affecting the buyer's willingness to purchase organic products and market potential for organic food products in Batticaloa District. Simple random sampling technique was used to select the sample and a pre-tested questionnaire survey was employed to collect primary data from 50 organic and 50 non-organic products buyers. Binary logistic regression was used to analyse collected data. A SWOT analysis was conducted for the organic market in Batticaloa district. The results revealed that quality of the organic products (OR =121.07), presence of non- communicable diseases (OR= 6.28), number of household members (OR= 0.36) and nutritional value of the organic foods (OR= 0.02) significantly ($p < 0.05$) influenced the buying decision of organic product buyers whereas gender of the respondent (OR=24.59) was significantly affecting on the decision at $p < 0.1$. The SWOT analysis implied that identified niche market for organic products, diversity of commodities and provision of fresh, healthy, village produced organic foods as strengths and unavailability of up-country organic vegetables and lack of marketing promotion as the weaknesses. Favourable government vision and rising demand for organic products highlighted the future potentials and opportunities for organic market. Competition from central market and street sellers, and extreme weather conditions were the main threats identified. The study concludes that the quality of the organic products as the main decision making factor considered by organic- buyers in Batticaloa district in Sri Lanka. These findings would help to understand the underlining buying behaviour of organic buyers and the potentials of the organic market in Batticaloa district.

Keywords: Batticaloa, Buyers willingness, Market potential, Organic products