

AGROTOURISM AS AN ADAPTATION STRATEGY FOR CLIMATE CHANGE IMPACTS IN TEA PLANTATIONS OF SRI LANKA

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The production of the Ceylon tea has been experiencing frequent negative fluctuations in the recent past. The phenomenon of climate change is one of the major reasons for the declined productivity and hence the income. Therefore, the tea plantation sector of Sri Lanka should concern more on income diversification methods as supplementary income sources. A blend between the tea and tourism industries has been identified as a possible solution in this regard. The study assesses the feasibility of tea tourism as an adaptation strategy for climate-induced income losses in the tea plantations in Sri Lanka. The study used a sample of 56 estates, selected through snowball sampling method. The required data were collected through a questionnaire survey together with key informant discussions and site observations. Primary data on general information, production details and the information on tea tours of the tea estates were collected during the survey. The collected data were analyzed using descriptive methods and Probit regression. The results of the regression analysis revealed that the estates with low land productivity, high labor productivity and small in scale of operation are more likely to adopt tea tourism as an income diversification method ($r^2 = 87\%$, $p < 0.05$). Almost every respondent believed that they experience loss of productivity even with a slight change of climate. As much as 83% of estates perceive the climate-induced fluctuations in tea revenue as a motivating factor for practicing of tea tourism. The study identifies the lack of government support as a major barrier in disseminating the tea tourism concept in the tea plantation sector of Sri Lanka. Further, the study finds that even at a very basic level, the concept of tea tourism contributes approximately two percent to the total income of the estate suggesting the potential to offset the climate-induced income losses in the plantation sector of Sri Lanka.

Keywords: Income, Productivity, Tea plantation, Tea tourism