

PROBLEMS FACED BY VEGETABLE FARMERS AND TRADERS IN HURULUWEWA IRRIGATION SCHEME

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Vegetable is an important sector in Sri Lanka as it contributes around 11% to the total agriculture production, that is, around 16.8% of the GDP in Sri Lanka. Vegetable industry is characterized by high dependency on weather, small scale production, perishability of product, high use of family labor and is more concentrated in remote areas where transport, electricity, communication, and water facilities are underdeveloped. This has resulted severe price fluctuations, high post harvest losses and high cost of business activities and finally low income to the farmers. This study was conducted with the objective of identification of different production and marketing problems faced by vegetable farmers and traders in Huruluwewa irrigation scheme and to suggest remedial measures to overcome above problems. The study was conducted with sixty farmers, five residential collectors, five city collectors, five transport agents, five commission agents of Dambulla and five retailers from the area. Study was conducted in 2008.

Results revealed that the per-capita vegetable production is comparatively high in this area and majority of the farmers are willing to adapt market oriented vegetable production. Land availability, agro climatic conditions, labor availability of the area are favorable for vegetable cultivation. However, water scarcity, lack of diversification of vegetable production during the season, poor credit facilities, poor quality seeds, very poor extension service, lack of a proper marketing information service, underdeveloped infrastructures and lack of processing of vegetables by farmers could be seen as some of the constraints that hinder the development of production and marketing of vegetables in this area.

Increasing water availability, rehabilitation of irrigation channel system of Huruluwewa, uplifting credit facilities, supplying of good seed materials, upgrading the extension service, forming Vegetable growers' Associations, educating vegetable farmers on vegetable marketing, rehabilitation of the rural road from Galenbindunuwewa to Habarana, and linking the farmers with supermarkets and whole sellers in Colombo are some of the suggested solutions to lift the above stated constraints.

Key words: Production and marketing, Market oriented vegetable production, Infrastructure deficiencies.