

AGRARIAN NEWSLETTER

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**Save and Grow
Approach for Climate
Resilient Agriculture**



Ministry of
Agriculture



Hector Kobbekaduwa Agrarian
Research and Training Institute



Building the Basis for Implementing the *Save and Grow* Approach of the FAO of the UNs: Regional Strategies on Sustainable and Climate Resilient Intensification of Cropping System

The current proportion of intensive crop production will be a threat for the sustenance of the resources and associated eco-systems, as fulfilling the needs of the new millennium with the rising global population and patterns and habits of food consumption pose a huge challenge. In order to achieve sustainability in crop production system in future, agriculture should be transformed to a system that meets production and productivity targets while saving the limited resources and inputs associated with. Hence, a new approach of *save and grow* emerged in the agriculture sector.

The above project is implemented with the objective of introducing strategies on adopting sustainable and climate resilient methods in cropping systems to minimize adverse climate impacts on paddy and other field crop cultivations in prolonged dry seasons and disastrous climatic conditions such as flood and drought conditions.

Hector Kobbekaduwa Agrarian Research and Training Institute is the main service provider of this project funded by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations and is collaboratively carried out with several stakeholders in the agricultural and agrarian sectors.

The project aims at supporting small farming systems to become more sustainable and resilient to adverse impacts of climate changes by introducing strategies with regard to crop management and farm mechanization through field

level experiments and demonstrations.

The field experiments are conducted to reduce the impact of climate change on paddy cultivation through increased water productivity and efficiency of resource utilization. Further, field activities are also being implemented in this project to upgrade the sustainability of other field crops (OFCs) and vegetable cultivation in up-lands with the application of principles of conservation agriculture. The field experiments and demonstrations are conducted with the farming community under *Meegassegama* Tank of *Thirappane* cascade in the Anuradhapura district.

In addition, a socio-economic survey was conducted on 1100 randomly selected farmer households representing all major, Mahaweli, minor irrigation and rain-fed schemes in the district. The agricultural as well as other socio-economic data and information of the last three cropping seasons was collected to study socio-economic conditions and changes in cultivation patterns of the small-scale farming sector in the face of changing climate.

The research team comprised of Senior Research Officers Mr. Shantha Hewage, Mr. Sidath Bandara, Ms. Geethani Samarasinghe and Ms. Thilani Padmajani and Research Officers Ms. Malathi Rambodagedara, Ms. Uthpala Jayasinghe and Ms. Nadeesha Dias of the Environment and Water Resources Management Division.

Determinants of Farmer's Decision on Vegetable Production in Sri Lanka

This study is conducted with the objectives of examining the effectiveness of existing information sharing tools/applications/systems for decision-making and identifying leading determinants to farmer's decision-making process in the vegetable sector of Sri Lanka. Thereby strategies can be formulated to enhance the efficiency of resource allocation in the local vegetable sector.

Kurunegala, Nuwara Eliya, Kandy, Badulla, Hambantota, Ratnapura, Puttlam and Anuradhapura are the areas from where 480 farmers are selected. The research that commenced in January 2019 will complete in October 2020.

The coordinator of the study is Research Officer Mr. I. P. P. M. Wijesinghe while the co-researchers are Research Fellow Dr. Ranjith Wickramasinghe, Senior Research Officer Dr. E. A. C. Priyankara and Research Officer Mr. Virajith Kuruppu of the Marketing, Food Policy and Agribusiness Division of Hector Kobbekaduwa Agrarian Research and Training Institute.



HARTI Project Awarded Best Contributor in the Agriculture Sector 2018

Market Intelligence Project conducted by Marketing, Food Policy and Agribusiness Division of Hector Kobbekaduwa Agrarian Research and Training Institute was awarded the Presidential Award for the best contributor in the agriculture sector in the year 2018, organized by the Ministry of Agriculture and Agricultural Modernization Project.

The project awarded in the "Research Category" has rendered a tremendous contribution in making policies in Sri Lanka during the period from 2015 and 2018 and providing information to all the parties in both audio and visual media.

Senior Research Officers Mr. W. H. D. Priyadarshana, Ms. R. P. Vidanapathirana, Ms. R. N. K. Rambukwella, Mr. W. A. N. Wijesooriya, Research Officers Ms. P. A. J. Champika and Ms. I. K. Edirisinghe have won accolades for this project.



Microfinance for Poverty Reduction

Access to and Utilization of Microfinance by Rural Poor in Uva Province

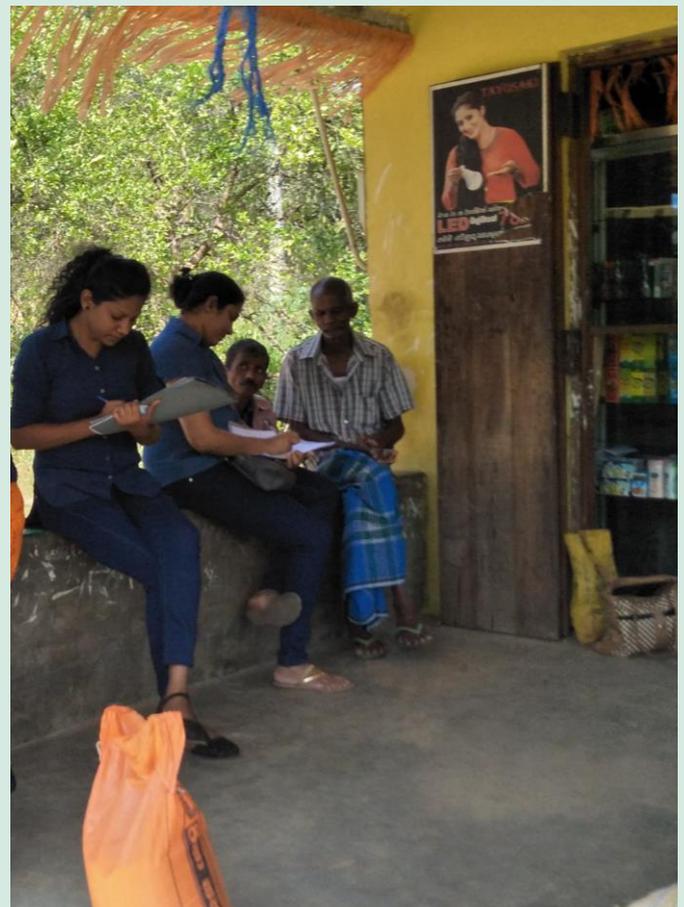
Microfinance is a widely acknowledged finance mechanism for poverty reduction. Today, it has become a widespread credit mechanism in Sri Lanka particularly in the rural sector. The HARTI conducted this study in the Uva Province to ascertain the outreach of microfinance among the poorest households in that location with more emphasis on the loan utilization aspects.

The sample comprised 392 poor households selected from 22 villages in the province. The key livelihood of many sample households was agriculture, the sample exclusively represents the rural agrarian poor, particularly the women. Amidst climate variability they struggle to sustain their crops and livestock. The study reveals how critically such vulnerable groups become victims of the microfinance services in compared to the benefits they enjoyed through those services. Though the majority of debtors obtain cultivation loans for seasonal crops they fail

to repay for two reasons; unplanned expenses and crop failures. High interest rates are a severe financial strain on the debtors. The study emphasizes how innovatively and effectively the Ministry of Agriculture (MOA) need to intervene to ease the burden of rural agrarian poor by improving both affordability and accessibility of cultivation loans through its own mechanisms such as *Govijana* banks. Agro-based women entrepreneurship development is also seen as a promising alternative where the MOA can intervene through its women based farmer organizations.

Directives for a policy decision on a stated mechanism for regulating the microfinance sector to streamline several microfinances related aspects such as compulsory registration of microfinance institutes, disbursement of loans based on proper assessment of credit worthiness, strong monitoring mechanism for credit investment, convenient loan features and conducting financial literacy programmes were recommended.

The research team of the Agricultural Resources Management Division of HARTI led by Research Officer Ms. Thushara Dharmawardhana comprised Research Fellow Ms. Renuka Weerakkody, Research Officers Ms. Rifana Buhary, Ms. Dinusha Rathnayake and Mr. Amal Dissanayake.



GAP of Small Holder Farmers in Sri Lanka

Status, Challenges, Prospects and Policy Strategies



Standards and technical regulations are increasingly becoming prominent in international trade policy debate. Further, consumers are ever more concerned about obtaining safe food and productions paying attention to environmental and worker wellbeing. Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) have emerged in this context and can be simply defined as doing things well and guaranteeing that it has been done.

The Division of Agribusiness Counsel (DoAgbiz) of Extension and Training Centre of Department of Agriculture initiated and funded “SL GAP” project with the aim of establishing a mechanism to ensure quality and safety of agricultural commodities to local and export markets through GAP. In this project it is aimed to instruct, inspect and monitor the whole value chain from the field (soil and seed) up to the retail markets of local markets and up to exit point when it reaches the European export market to assure the quality of products. Therefore, it is vital to understand challenges of implementing GAP to overcome the barriers and have

awareness of positive factors, particularly to compete with export market without rejections while assuring food quality and safety.

Since this is a novel practice in Sri Lanka, the study sought to identify existing operational mechanisms of “SL GAP” in selected districts, conduct a situation analysis in selected districts to identify the positive factors and negative factors for “SL GAP” and provide policy decisions regarding avenues for dissemination of GAP as an innovative farm practice.

It reveals that there is no special recognition in local market towards “GAP” products from the general public which prevents small scale farmers fetching a good price. Steps should be taken to establish GAP stalls island wide and collecting centres and cool rooms should be established at least in major producing areas particularly for GAP products. More farmer awareness programmes are needed for smooth functioning of GAP programme.

The study also recommended government intervention to introduce a ceiling price for GAP products to encourage “GAP” farmers.

The research coordinator is Senior Research Officer Ms. B. A. D. S. Bamunuarachchi and co-researchers are Senior Research Officers Ms. Sagarika Hitihamu and Ms. M. D. Susila Lurdu of Agricultural Policy and Project Evaluation Division.



Training Programme on Empowering Farmer Women



A one-day training programme to empower farmer women was held in 20 Agrarian Development Centres in the Kurunegala district in the first quarter of the year 2019. The objectives were developing a sustainable

sustainable methodology for the concept of nutritious home garden, creating a healthy generation through a nutritious and healthy diet through the nutritious home garden and empowering self-esteemed and self-confident women with management abilities for the utilization of time, labour and money to build home garden as an additional income generating source to create a prosperous farmer society.

The programme trained 2175 of “සිතමු” farmer organization leaders. Head of the Human Resources and Institutional Development Division, Research Fellow Mr. S. M. A. Samarakoon coordinated the training programme, Research Officer Mr. Sangeeth Prasad Fernando was the assistant coordinator and Research Fellow Mr. H. M. J. K. Herath was the resource person of the programme.

PRA for Rural Development

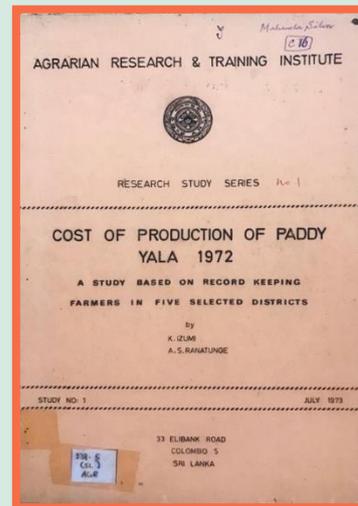
Making action plans with participatory rural approach (PRA) is vital for the community centred programmes. Similarly, providing training on making action plans for the officers working directly in rural development is necessary for the success of the programmes. The main objective of the training programme on “Using Participatory Rural Approach (PRA) for Planning and Management of Rural Development Programmes” was to fulfill this need.

Two training programmes were held in the first quarter of 2019. Thirty-eight Project Officers attached to the Agriculture Department and District Agriculture Department and 30 officers including Development Officers attached to the Divisional Secretariat Office in the Kurunegala district and Madahapola Agrarian Development Centre of Agrarian Development Department and Agrarian Research and Production Assistants were trained.

The programme was coordinated by the Head of the Human Resources and Institutional Development Division, Research Fellow Mr. S. M. A. Samarakoon. Research Officer Mr. Sangeeth Prasad Fernando was the assistant coordinator and former Additional Director Mr. R. L. N. Jayatissa, Research Fellow Mr. H. M. J. K. Herath, Research Officers Mr. I. V. Kuruppu and Mr. Amal Dissanayake were the external resource persons.

1st of the series

Cost of Production of Paddy Yala 1972



The first research report published by the institute (English research study series) was “Cost of Production of Paddy; Yala 1972”. It was published in July, 1973. It was a study based on record keeping of farmers in five selected districts: Hambantota, Polonnaruwa, Kurunegala, Kandy and Colombo. The study was conducted by

Research Officers Mr. K. Izumi and Mr. A. S. Ranatunge of the Production Economics Unit of the Agrarian Research and Training Institute (presently HARTI) in association with the Agrarian Extension Division of the Department of Agriculture under the consultancy of FAO Chief Advisor Mr. Frank Saunders. The research study was published in both English and Sinhala languages.

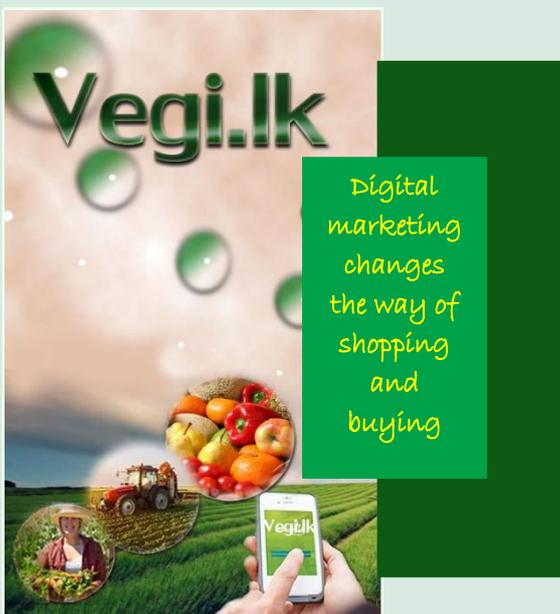
The then Director was Dr. C. Narayanasami and the Institute was situated at 33, Elibank Road, Colombo 05.

Mobile App to Connect Farm to Fork

Geographic Information System Unit of Hector Kobbekaduwa Agrarian Research and Training Institute in collaboration with Arthur C Clarke Institute for Modern Technologies is conducting a project titled “Development of an app to create market link among producers, sellers and consumers” to develop a mobile application with the objectives of linking farmers, sellers and consumers in agricultural product market, minimizing marketing issues in those sectors and reducing postharvest losses. Other specific objectives are to capture foreign markets, create a good market information system for agriculture through mobile phone, minimize transport and intermediate cost in agriculture marketing and minimize waste of agriculture products at market place.

Farmers, wholesalers, middlemen, retailers and consumers are the target customer groups of this application since the proposed application links with agricultural markets.

Head of GIS Unit, Research Fellow Mr. H. M. J. K. Herath is coordinating the project.



CoD Training Programme



Minimum Cost of Diet (CoD) is one of the most popular methods used globally to measure the affordability of population for a nutritious diet.

CoD monitoring system was established at the Marketing, Food Policy and Agri-business Division of Hector Kobbekaduwa Agrarian Research and Training Institute (HARTI) with the support of the World Food Programme (WFP) in 2014. HARTI has been progressively updating the analysis every year and disseminating the findings among the respective stakeholders.

Further to this, a four-day training programme was organized with the support of WFP to update the existing knowledge and skills of researchers and professionals analyzing Cost of Diet (CoD) in Sri Lanka. The programme conducted from February 25 to 28, 2019 at the Subasinghe hall of the Institute was designed for disseminating novel technical knowledge on most advanced software, analytical tools and methods of modelling.

Director of HARTI Mr. Keerthi B. Kotagama, Sri Lanka Deputy Representative to the World Food Programme Mr. Giuendak Hoang and Director (Planning) of the Ministry of National Policies and Economic Affairs Mr. H. P. Somathilake participated in the inaugural ceremony and the Secretary of the Ministry of Agriculture Mr. K. D. S. Ruwanchandra, Additional Secretary of the Ministry of National Policies and Economic Affairs Mr. K. Mahesan, Sri Lanka Representative to the World Food Programme Ms. Brenda Barton, were among the distinguished participants of the closing ceremony. Certificates were also awarded to the participants of the programme. Senior Research Officer Mr. N. P. G. Samantha of HARTI coordinated the Training Programme.

RTI Training Programme



Training Programme on creating Awareness of Right To Information Act for all Statistical Assistants, Management Assistants, Office Assistants and Drivers of the Hector Kobbekaduwa Agrarian Research and Training Institute was held on June 14, 2019 at the Mahinda Silva Auditorium.

Public Lecture on National Audit Act



A public lecture titled “Audit Provisions and Handling Audit Issues” delivered by former Auditor General of Sri Lanka Mr. Sarath Chandrasiri Mayadunne was held on May 31, 2019 at the Mahinda Silva Auditorium. The staff members of the institute participated.

Vesak Festival 2019



A Blissful Vesak!

A *Dhamma Deshana* and a Vesak lantern competition organized by the Welfare Society of Hector Kobbekaduwa Agrarian Research and Training Institute to mark the blissful event of Vesak were held on May 17, 2019. The *Dhamma Deshana* delivered by Ven. Kelaniye Ajitha Thera added a spiritual tinge to the occasion. The inter-divisional Vesak lantern competition was held with the generous contribution of the colleagues and the Welfare Society.

AGRARIAN NEWSLETTER

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