

## **POTENTIAL TO SHIFT FROM PADDY TO PROFITABLE OTHER FIELD CROPS (OFCs) AND ITS IMPLICATIONS ON FOOD SECURITY**

G.D.D.T JAYAWARDENE, C. SIVAYOGANATHAN, AND AHAMED ARSHAD\*

*Department of Agricultural Extension, Faculty of Agriculture, University of Peradeniya  
\*Intermediate Technology Development Group (South Asia), Colombo*

Rice is the dominant crop of Sri Lanka. However, the cost of rice production has been increasing during the past and profit declining. Therefore, paddy farming offers only a subsistence level livelihood. Although we are nearly self-sufficient in paddy, Sri Lanka has been a food deficit country with regard to OFCs. So, a well-planned programme of crop diversification from paddy to OFCs would ensure the food security of the country.

The objective of this study was to examine the potential to shift from paddy to OFCs and its implications on food security. The data were collected by field survey, interviews with key informants and from published and unpublished secondary sources. The field survey was done with a stratified random sample of 75 farmers selected from five Grama Niladari divisions in the Eppawala Agrarian Service division. A structured questionnaire was used to interview farmers. The data were analyzed by frequency distribution, chi-square, t-test, regression analysis and reliability test.

Profit from one hectare of maize, chillie, soybean and big onion was higher than the profit from one hectare of paddy. Therefore, high proportion (47%) of farmers had a positive attitude regarding shifting from paddy to OFCs. High income from OFCs, lack of water and variability of income over time were identified as the main reasons for shifting from paddy to OFCs. But, farmers do not like to give up paddy cultivation completely because rice is needed for home consumption.

Farmer families in the study area spent more than 50% of their income on food items. According to Central Bank, such farmer families can be categorized as poor households. Per capita rice and vegetable consumption in the study area was very high and per capita consumption of eggs, meat, fish, milk, bread, and wheat was less compared to national averages. Sixty-six percent of the energy requirement and 55% of protein intake were obtained from rice. Thirty-two percent of the families obtained less than 75% of their energy requirement from the major food items (rice, wheat, vegetable, dry fish, fish, meat and milk). Malnutrition in selected villages under minor irrigation scheme was very high. Total income and profitability of paddy were found to be significantly associated with irrigation. Sixty one percent of the variability in total income of households was explained by irrigation and total cultivated area.

Findings reveal that shifting from paddy to OFCs would ensure the food security status of the households by increasing the net return from OFCs, generating job opportunities, providing a balanced diet and increasing the cultivable area. Sri Lanka should try to maintain self-sufficiency in rice and encourage shifting from paddy to OFCs in the areas possessing a comparative advantage. Therefore, well-planned crop diversification program should be developed through farmer participation. Well-drained soils should be allocated for OFCs whereas poorly drained soils should be used for paddy. An in-depth analysis of constraints for cultivation of OFCs should be done and necessary action taken to overcome them.