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### DEVELOPMENT OF A TECHNICAL GUIDE ON PRUNING OF TEA

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Tea small-holdings play a major role in the tea sector as it accounts for 44% of tea lands and almost 60% of tea production, indicating its greater production, and also productivity, vis-a-vis the estate sector. However, optimum production from small-holdings is yet to be achieved. The dissemination of information to small holders is one possible means of increasing production in this sector.

Technical guides in Sinhala and Tamil are a felt need for providing technical information to field workers and educated farmers. Thus, the objective of this study was to develop a technical guide, in Sinhala, on an important field operation in tea cultivation. A previous study had identified pruning as an important area in which a guide was needed.

The method used to develop the guide was as follows: (1) Identifying the target group; (2) Defining the objectives; (3) Determining the technical content; (4) Deciding the form of presentation; (5) Writing the guide; (6) Pre-testing; and (7) Editing.

The specific topics were identified by a literature review and with the assistance of three experts on tea. These topics were verified and prioritized by a mail survey of 30 Tea Extension Officers, who were selected randomly. They represented eight regions of the country and had 8-15 years of experience. Information was obtained from books, journals, and advisory circulars available at four libraries. The assistance of experts was obtained in selecting the most relevant information for inclusion in the guide. Measures were taken to increase the ease of understanding and the visual impact of the guide.

For pre testing it was given to eight Tea Extension Officers of the Tea Small Holdings Development Authority (TSHDA) and two tea small holders. Ratings were obtained on a scale of 0-10. The feedback indicated that the guide was very successful in providing information as this aspect obtained an average value of 9.83. The standard of photographs and diagrams has to be improved before publishing as they obtained averages of only 6.7 and 5.6. The scores obtained on the accuracy of information, and language style, were 8.8 and 8.5 respectively.

The technical guide includes 12 short chapters, covering bush formation, role of starch reserves, pruning cycle, practices before pruning, types of pruning, lung pruning, role of lungs, after pruning care, pest & disease control, development of seedling tea fields, and labour use. The guide contains 11 photographs, 10 diagrams and is 37 pages in length.

The guide could be used as a resource by tea extension officers, and also as a resource in training them. The secondary target group of educated and progressive tea farmers will also benefit from this guide.