

## **Use of ICT by women in floriculture growers: Western Province**

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Information and communication technology (ICT) helps develop large networks among communities that can assist in the sharing of information, marketing and education. It has contributed immensely to socio-economic development through improving communication and marketing facilities in many countries<sup>1</sup>.

Floriculture as an industry is considered a high income generating agribusiness and demand for flowers in the country is growing with the development of higher living standards of Sri Lankans and flowers are used in many life events such as for greetings, weddings and funerals. The country earned around USD 14.9 million in 2014 from the export of floriculture products. Sri Lanka is home to an enormous botanical diversity and can offer a wide range of floricultural items. Presently international floriculture auctions consider the virtualization of supply chains rather than having physical presence in auction houses<sup>2</sup>. However, usage of ICT among small and medium level agribusiness growers and producers is not at a satisfactory level for various reasons. The potential for the use of ICT has not been identified properly. The floriculture business is dominated by a few exporters, middle level growers and small scale growers. The National Policy Framework of the Government of Sri Lanka aims at developing the floriculture sector as a source of income generation for unemployed women in the country.

This study attempts to highlight the use of ICT among women floriculture growers in the Western Province of Sri Lanka. The study has focused on a sample of 320 women operating in the floriculture industry in Colombo (108 participants), Kaluthara (110 participants) and Gampaha (102 participants) districts. Core research methods comprised of quantitative questionnaire surveys and data analysis conducted utilizing parametric testing approaches, using the statistical software, SPSS.

The results indicate wide use of telephone facilities but limited use of ICT among the sample group. Only 4% used email facilities for business communication and among them, 75% earned more than Rs. 40,000.00 per month. Many growers used smart phones only for communication purposes. Many of the women growers were dependent on their children for visiting websites and sending emails. Although many had high education qualifications, they were not interested in using websites or e-flyers to promote their products. This study provides an insight for policy implementation to upgrade ICT knowhow of women floriculture growers in Sri Lanka so as to promote this industry.

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### **References**

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