

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The aim of the government is to achieve self-sufficiency in other field crop sector for crops such as maize, green gram, cowpea, finger millet, black gram and onions where 42 percent of the annual requirement of the country is still imported. This requires increase in the supply of OFC to be achieved both in terms of production and productivity. A prerequisite to increase agricultural production and improve labour productivity is the access to equipment and machinery to carry out farm operations. The introduction of mechanization to agriculture has normally brought about increases in both labour and land productivity in addition to reduction in the drudgery of farming operations.

OFC production is characterized by small scale operation and increased use of family and exchange labour where mechanization is limited and mostly confined to land preparation while activities such as weeding, planting and harvesting are still carried out manually. Seasonal fluctuations of labour availability are one of the main constraints which add to increase in the cost of production and restrict the area under expansion under OFCs.

Mechanization of farm activities saves cost, time and labour due to timeliness of operations, better quality of operations and exactness in the application of the inputs. In spite of both the given advantages of farm mechanization and the machinery introduced their adoption is restricted. Therefore farm mechanization needs to be a priority concern in the effort to achieve self-sufficiency targets in OFCs production.

Even though a variety of new machines have been developed and/or introduced to mechanize various operations in OFCs production, adoption of such technologies lags behind the required level, sometimes not found at all. This study aimed at investigating into causality behind poor level of mechanization in OFC production both from supply and demand perspectives. Two districts of Ampara and Moneragala were selected as the location for this study by taking into account the physical location, the extent cultivated with OFCs, ethnic diversity, and state of poverty.

From the study one can garner certain facts with regard to the constraints in mechanization from the supply and demand angle. It is evident from the study that main constraint from supply side is the unavailability of farm machinery for variety of operations while the available machines have technical defects. With regard to the demand the constraint lies in the

incompatibility of machinery to suit the local farm environment coupled with attitudes of farming community to use of new technology. In addition there are other factors which compound this issue such as the poor awareness among farmers of available machinery, affordability due to high cost and poor farmer income. Perpetuation of this level of mechanization in the OFC sector is due to the constraints contributing both singly or/and collectively.

For the government to take policy decisions so as to invest on increasing the appropriate machinery the tradeoff between 'machine suits to farm' versus 'farm suits to machine' should be considered. The choice of machine to suit the farm the available options are while expediting farm level adoptive research for low cost, high tech efficient machines, improve the staff strength, tax concessions to import machines encourage farmers and agricultural and engineering students of universities and provide them incentives for innovations on farm machinery.

In addition other recommendations are that the Department of Agriculture should prioritize providing farm machinery at subsidized rates/under easy pay schemes. To improve farmer awareness strengthening of technology transfer through machinery demonstrations, the training programmes conducted by FMTC should be farmer driven programmes targeting farm mechanization and farmers should be formally made aware of the use, maintenance and advantages of farm machinery at appropriate meetings with relevant officials.