

WALAGAMBAHUWA CONCEPT AND ITS IMPACT ON THE NATIONAL FOOD PRODUCTION PROGRAM IN THE DRY ZONE OF SRI LANKA

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The minor tank development program is one of the most important components in the Cropping Systems National Program of Sri Lanka. It is estimated that there are about 10,000 minor tank environment production complexes in the Dry Zone of Sri Lanka, encircling a cultivable area of 100-100,000 ha. of lowland paddy. Traditionally, the rice yields are quite low in this region (1-12 t/ha) and there is no record of other field crops grown under such conditions. The rice cultivation is often a failure and the success of rice crop was once in five or six years. Therefore, it was thought, that any new technology generated to improve production in this region could increase rice production in the area enormously.

Walagambahuwa minor tank with its purana (Traditional) village settlement is typical of minor tank environments in the Dry Zone of Sri Lanka. It was selected for the project study. The technology developed and practiced at this settlement scheme has increased the rice production 2-4 times and furthermore, the rice cultivation that was possible once in five or six years frequency is being increased to once a year. Very often double cropping of rice was possible. The new technology was well screened against socio-economic constraints to production. The new technology is nothing but timely cultivation with relatively short age variety of rice, so that it could mature using the incidental rainfall in the Maha season. The run-off collected in the tank in Maha season was utilized very rarely in Maha for rice cultivation but often for Yala cultivation of rice or other field crops.