

FARMING SYSTEMS RESEARCH : ITS RELEVANCE TO
SRI LANKA AGRICULTURE

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Dominance of the Farming Systems Research (FSR) approach in the study of tropical agriculture has been growing steadily over the last decade. This is being widely supported by both national and International Research Centers, particularly in Africa and Asia¹.

The Farming System approach does not imply the use of a new independent science; rather, it involves the application of knowledge available from the traditional agricultural research, but with an emphasis to the system approach. Thus, it is holistic in outlook, interdisciplinary in nature, concerned with the small farmer and include activities at the farm levels as well as research station level. Hence it has less control with its focus on a particular discipline or commodity and is aimed at the improvement of human welfare through sustainable increased agricultural productivity.

Sri Lankan agriculture is diverse and composed mainly of limited resource smallholdings, engaged in a variety of enterprises. They are being served by a network of research centers developed on the disciplinary and commodity lines. Extension services are commodity oriented and multidisciplinary approach is lacking in both extension and research.

This paper attempts to examine the major features of the FSR approach and its relevance to Sri Lankan agriculture in the context of the socio-economic and structural basis of small farms and the existing research extension setup.

The analysis indicates that except, perhaps in the rice sector, innovations generated through agricultural research are not widely adopted by farmers and the reasons for poor adoption are related to the socio-economic circumstances of the farmers.

The FSR may well be incorporated to the existing research setup and would encourage development of technologies more appropriate to the resource limited farmers by encouraging the identification of relevant and researchable problems with a better understanding of the farmer circumstances.

References

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