

LAND USE IN THE NUWARA ELIYA DISTRICT :
A CASE FOR INTEGRATED LAND USE PLANNING

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A vacuum has existed in Sri Lanka in the integrated planning of land use at the district level. The situation is highlighted in the case of Nuwara Eliya district where tea is the major land use accounting for 38% of land in the district. However, 13% of tea hectarage is on lands not suitable or marginally suitable for it. Of the total paddy extent cultivated only 25% are on lands with moderate suitability. The situation is much the same for small holdings under tobacco and other annual crops.

On the contrary, land uses which are highly desirable in the region such as minor crops, horticulture and economic forestry play only an insignificant role in terms of present land use.

The implications of the above findings are that improper land uses dominate the region causing severe environmental problems such as soil erosion and enhancing the poverty of both the land and its users. At the same time such land uses constrain the optimal use of the land for more productive uses.

Therefore, the need for a careful and systematic land use plan for the district is clearly evident taking into consideration factors such as environmental conservation, energy requirements, socio-economics and on a broader context national and regional planning objectives.