COCONUT BASED FARMING SYSTEMS : FEW EXAMPLES OF SUSTAINED VIABILITY

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Small farms dominate the coconut holdings of Sri Lanka, where pure monoculture coconut plantations are rare. Research evidence shows various means of improving productivity and resource use efficiency on these farms through systematization. Nevertheless, earlier studies have identified only sporadic success based on such technology, despite strong state promotion.

This study reports case studies on eight outstanding farms, across the coconut triangle, which have successfully adopted crop diversification technologies. The study concentrated on identifying important characteristics that explained the success of these outstanding farmers. Each farm was studied in the context of its bio-physical and socioeconomic environment.

The following characteristics were identified as important parameters for their superior performance. Despite the diverse bio-physical and socio-economic background, all case study farmers were early adopters of crop diversification technology. They are systematic and intelligent. Their selected technologies have dovetailed with their resource endowments. They have consistently modified their techniques to suit local conditions and changing resource limitations. The degree of success in most cases is related primarily to their extent of adjustment of cropping patterns and enterprise combinations to suit their resource restraints.

Progressive emergence of seasonal labour scarcities, rising input prices against low output-low price equilibriums, have gradually shrunk their profit margins, making the technology less attractive for the less enterprising late-comers.