

B-39: Fluctuations in production, price and extent of bean and tomato

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Secondary data of tomato and bean for the period 1975-90 was used to examine the fluctuating patterns in production, extent, productivity and prices and to obtain their possible inter- relationships.

The data of all major producing districts (except Jaffna) were analysed using time-series techniques. Best fitting models were selected to explain the variation patterns.

Except in Nuwara Eliya and Badulla districts, there was no marked trend in any other district for production, extent and productivity. A drop or an almost stabilised distribution was observed after 1982-86 in most districts. For the island too, the extent under both vegetables has remained nearly stable while production showed a slight increase until 1988 and then a drop. Nominal prices of both vegetables showed an exponentially increasing trend while real prices fluctuated around a constant. The fluctuations in production, productivity and extent were related to the fluctuation pattern of rainfall.

The results also showed that there was no change in market and producer prices in real terms for over 15 years, resulting in no improvement in the real income of the farmer. This stagnancy in the living standard taken together with perishability of vegetables and poor marketing facilities may have reduced their interest towards vegetable cultivation. This has led to a drop or stagnancy in extent of cultivation in most of the districts studied and consequently affected the production. Rainfall had a considerable effect on the changes in extent and production and its cyclic behaviour influenced productivity. The rainfall cycle (around 7 years) coincided with the productivity cycle.