

**B-78: Food consumption and nutritional status of undergraduate students in the Faculty of Agriculture**

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This study was undertaken among 566 undergraduate students in the Faculty of Agriculture, University of Peradeniya, to investigate their nutritional status, nutritional quality of their diet and the effect of examination stress on the nutritional status.

Weight, height, Mid Upper Arm Circumference (MUAC), and triceps skin-fold thickness were measured to evaluate nutritional status. Dietary assessment was done by analysing meals provided by canteens. In addition, female students eating from canteens were compared with those preparing their own meal. Examination stress was assessed in 3rd year students taking all the above measurements except height, before the study leave period and just after the examination.

The mean height (cm), weight (kg), MUAC (cm) skin-fold thickness (mm) in female and male students were  $155.5 \pm 0.4$ ,  $4$  and  $167.4 \pm 0.3$ ,  $45.6 \pm 0.2$  and  $54.4 \pm 0.3$ ,  $22.8 \pm 0.2$  and  $25.0 \pm 0.1$  and  $13.9 \pm 0.1$  and  $8.5 \pm 0.2$  respectively. These values are lower than the standards but not different among batches. According to their BMI, 42% of females and 37% of males were below the normal range.

In females, skinfold thickness was reduced by 14% and in males, body weight, MUAC and skinfold thickness were reduced by 1%, 3% and 7% respectively, during the 3 months of examination (including study leave).

Energy intake ranged from 81-86% of the RDA in female and 61-74% of the RDA in males. Girls preparing their own food obtained 13% more energy and 34% more protein than girls consuming food from canteens. Although meals offered by girls' canteens provide adequate amount of energy, protein content in the plate was 32 g. Since girls do not often consume all the food on the plate, actual intakes are lower. In males, protein, iron and Vitamin A intakes ranged from 97-115%, 111-153% and 122-143% of the RDA. Their low energy intake was due to insufficient quantity of rice in the plate.