

F-07: Cereal self sufficiency and food security in Sri Lanka

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Although there has been an impressive growth in rice production in Sri Lanka over the last 2 decades, the ratio between production and population has not improved. Although rice imports show a marked reduction, heavy wheat imports have also continued. Despite this, statistics reveal that Sri Lanka has achieved about 90% of her rice requirements and there have been fears of over supply with no export potential. Whether this a realistic picture of food self sufficiency, as an indicator of food security, is an issue that needs to be addressed. This problem is analysed estimating the total cereal requirement of the population.

A more realistic figure of self sufficiency, as an indicator of food security, is cereal (rice+wheat) self sufficiency. This analysis shows that over the last decade, local rice production has been maintaining only around 65% of total cereal availability. This shows that Sri Lanka is yet to meet its cereal requirements through local rice production. Within this context, one can evaluate the potential, local rice production has, to meet this requirement. Studies show that Sri Lanka has a comparative advantage in producing rice viz-a-viz its competitors. Sensitivity analysis also shows productivity to be the most critical variable contributing towards efficiency. Given that rice productivity has reached a plateau since mid 1980s, more research in development of new varieties is the most viable solution to shift the production frontier, so that cereal self-sufficiency can be achieved.

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