

B-11: Pesticide usage in vegetable cultivation in Batticaloa district

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A study was done to assess the level of adoption of pesticides, dosage levels applied and the time interval between last pesticide application and harvest. A survey, using a structured questionnaire, was done in the vegetable growing areas of Batticaloa district. A random sample of 138 vegetable farmers were interviewed.

Survey showed that all farmers had used pesticides to control pests, and none used other methods. 70% of farmers used pesticides to keep the crop 'clean of pest attack', while 38% used it to prevent pest attack. Also 59% farmers sprayed it before appearance of pests.

62% of farmers sprayed pesticides above the recommended levels, and 77% used one half times above the recommended levels, while 23% used twice the recommended levels. Reasons for the use of high dosage levels differed from achieving quick control (24%) to inability to control at recommended dosage levels (47%).

Time interval before harvest after final application varied from 2 to 3 weeks among 49 to 50% of onion farmers, to one week or less among 36 to 59% chillie farmers and 88% brinjal farmers. Okra farmers harvested the crop on every other day after final application.

Thus it was evident that pesticide usage was universal among vegetable farmers and other methods of pest control were not practised. Pesticides were used to mainly prevent pest attack and to keep crop 'clean of pests' for sale. A large number of farmers used high dosage levels above the recommended rates. Due to the short pre-harvest interval, chances for pesticide residues in crops such as chillies, brinjals and okra was evident.