

F-12: A case study of small scale vegetable farming at Talawakelle

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Vegetable farming is an economic activity sensitive to market and environmental forces. Variations in harvests, fluctuating price levels, and low profit margins made vegetable cultivation an exceptionally high risk agricultural activity. This as a general rule has prevented the emergence of a class of farmers specialised in vegetable cultivation within the agricultural sector.

In this case study an exception to this rule is presented, where, high value, small-scale, vegetable farming has been consistently carried out at a profit by small farmers in Talawakelle area. The study covered a group of farmers

living within the Urban Council area predominantly engaged in the cultivation of a combination of high valued vegetable crops such as capsicum chillies, potatoes, beans, carrots along with relatively low value crops such as radish and cabbage. Typologies of these cultivators have been developed using farm records and other information collected through indepth interviews, in order to identify the environmental, agricultural, social and economic reasons which have impinged on the vegetable farming which made them different from vegetable cultivators in other areas.

Some of the principal factors have been the responsiveness of these farmers to changes in rainfall, humidity, texture of soils, together with changing market conditions of the different cropping seasons within the year.