

E B I Dayananda, Mahinda Wijeratne
Dept of Agricultural Economics, Faculty of Agriculture, University of Ruhuna, Mapalana,
Kamburupitiya

The farmer organization approach has drawn considerable attention in the field of agricultural extension. This study focuses on the interventions of the farmer organizations in agricultural extension. The study deals with the farmer organizations which were established by the government under the Agrarian services act (Amendment) 1991.

The objectives of the study were: (1) to examine the information dissemination process via the farmer organizations; (2) to estimate the farmers' participation in decision making; (3) to evaluate the main functions of farmer organizations; supply of credit, fertilizer, seed paddy and agro-chemicals, marketing agricultural products, construction work at village level repairs of irrigation work, etc.

This study was carried out in the Galle district, one of the main rice growing districts in southern Sri Lanka. Because of the limitations in available resources, the study was restricted to one Divisional Secretariat (DS) division (Ambalangoda). There were 36 farmer organizations in the Ambalangoda DS division under 3 Agrarian Services Centres. As there were different number of farmer organizations under each Agrarian Services Centre, proportionate stratified random sampling technique was used to select 10 farmer organizations. There were 540 members in the selected 10 farmer organizations. A sample of 100 farmers was drawn on proportionate random sampling technique. A field survey has been employed to collect information for the study. Data was collected from office bearers of the farmer organizations, members of the farmer organizations, Agricultural Instructors and the Divisional Officers of the Department of Agrarian Services.

The findings of this study reveal the following facts. The farmer organizations had not played a significant role in the knowledge dissemination process. The farmer participation in decision making is also not satisfactory. The main functions expected by the farmer organizations such as supply of credit and inputs, marketing and involvement in irrigation works were also not achieved. The living conditions of the members, illustrate that the majority of them are rural poor. They have limited success in agriculture, operating as isolated individuals. Therefore, the collective activities can be mentioned as a very important aspect for increasing their standard of living. The existing farmer organizations have functioned very marginally. The identified main reasons for the ineffectiveness of those farmer organizations were: the bureaucratic nature of establishments, political problems, failures in government policies and the limitations in the extension service. Therefore, in order to achieve the expected results through the farmers organization approach in extension, the above mentioned shortcomings must be eliminated.