

B-122: Improved cropping patterns for agro-well farming

R M Ranaweera Banda

(Field Crops Research and Development Institute, Maha Illuppallama)

At present over 5000 agro-wells are in use in the Anuradhapura district. Majority of farmers using these agro-wells do not follow proper farming practices. A survey conducted in 1995, has shown that the agro-well farmers cultivate low income vegetables, use low quality seeds, do not have adequate knowledge on suitable planting time, therefore, resulting in low cropping intensity and low land and water productivity. As a result these farmers get low income and continue to live at subsistence level. Purpose of the present study was to test 3 cropping patterns on their performance on addressing the above mentioned issue.

Three cropping patterns designed on the basis of findings from a pola vegetable marketing survey and field observations were tested in farmers field during the period February to September 1997. Farm records were maintained to compute cost of cultivation, net return and annual income. Same data was collected from 10 other agro-well farmers for comparison.

Results indicated that net profit per year per farmer from the 3 tested cropping patterns were Rs.160,000, 89,000 and 64,000. The average net profit obtained by the other 10 farmers was Rs 46,600 per year per farmer. Cost of cultivation (per farmer per year per ha) values in designed patterns ranged from Rs.36,500 to 67,500. However, the average cost of cultivation value obtained from the farmers was as low as Rs.31,500 per year/farmer/ha. Even with such low cost of cultivation farmers failed to obtain high profits due to the fact that low management levels have resulted in low yields. For example, okra yield

was lower by more than 50% in farmers fields compared to that in cropping patterns tested.