F-16: Current trends in technology adoption in the ten smallholdings sector

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The productivity of tea smallholdings sector in Sri Lanka depends largely on the degree of adoption of recommended technology. A study was carried out in 3 rural villages in Matara district (Aninkanda, Millawa and Waralla) to ascertain current trends and obstacles in technology adoption. The sample consisted of 90 smallholders and the data was collected using a questionnaire. First, all the recommended practices were grouped into 11 packages such as fertilizer application, soil and moisture conservation, plucking, field establishment, training of plants, infilling, weed control, pests and diseases control, pruning, selection of clones, and shading. Each package comprised sub-indicators to reveal farmers' adoption level. Farmers were given marks for sub-indicators high, middle, low and zero. The mean adoption level of a package was calculated by averaging the farmers' scores assigned for a particular package and converting it into a percentage.

The mean adoption level in the area was 70%. Packages such as plucking (98%) clone selection (90%), field establishment (83%), and fertilizer application (77%) were highly adopted whereas soil and moisture conservation (59%), pests and diseases control (37%) and weed control (58%) were marginally adopted. Moderately adopted packages included infilling (71%), shading (68%), training of plants (65%) and pruning (61%). Major limitations for low productivity and technology adoption in the area were price fluctuation of tea, inadequate subsidies, scarcity of skilled labour, high labour wages and non-availability of inputs at the local market. The suggested solutions by farmers to enhance both productivity and technology adoption included introduction of a certified price scheme, an expedited subsidy scheme, introduction of a crop insurance scheme, improvement of the existing extension service, and making inputs locally available.