

**F-19: Pesticide policy and its practical applications: case of rice farmers in the Hambantota district**

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The Government of Sri Lanka introduced the Control of Pesticides Act no: 33 in 1980 and an Amendment Act no: 6 in 1994 to minimize the pesticides related health, environment and other problems. Such regulations have embodied various measures to minimize the adverse effects of pesticides. The purpose of this study was to examine the relevance of this Act to farmers and retail sellers, and also to investigate its implications. The study was carried out in Hambantota district covering 60 farmers and 20 retail sellers. Two separately structured questionnaires were used to collect data during the period Oct. - Dec. 1997.

The study demonstrates that most of the farmers have applied insecticides classified as class II by the World Health Organization (WHO). Some farmers have used de-registered pesticides namely Monocrotophos and Methomidophose in the Yala season, 1997. This was due to the fact that although the de-registration of these chemicals came into effect in 1995, the expiry date of the stocks were extended to July 1997. Thus farmers have used the available stocks in the Yala season. In the selection of insecticides, farmers have relied mainly on their experience. This study indicates the knowledge level pertaining to the Act and its stated facts on pre-harvest interval; storage; transportation and their actual practices are not up to a satisfactory standard. It is evident that, 73% of farmers were aware of the Control of Pesticides Act. Among them 56% knew about the banned pesticides; 16% knew about the regulations regarding storage; but no one knew about the pre-harvest interval or that pesticides cannot be carried with foodstuffs. With respect to the practice of storage methods, most of the farmers (42%) stored insecticides in any place outside their house and only 18% of them stored it safely under lock and key. Further, it was observed that most of the traders knew about the banned pesticides, methods of storing chemicals (45%) and how to sell pesticides (70%). It is evident that most of the shops selling pesticides sold them with other items such as cement, glassware, etc. However, 15% retail sellers delineated that they have sold insecticides along with the foodstuffs. This practice is against the regulations of the Act. In fact, they have not followed the training programme hence, certificates were not issued. The training programmes were conducted according to the amendment made to the Control of Pesticides Act in 1994, that stipulated that the pesticide retailers should be trained, registered and issued a certificate. This procedure will permit them to sell pesticides.

The study shows that there is a difference between the formal regulations and its practical applications. One major reason is that the monitoring systems are not strictly executed in order to maintain the standards explained in the Act. As the enforcement of the regulations of the Act mainly rests on the monitoring system, governing institutes should be granted more legal powers and facilities to gain control over the activities associated with pesticide use.