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The impacts of the salt water exclusion and drainage (SWED) project on paddy farming in Mattegoda Yaya, Koggala

Koggala Salt Water Exclusion and Drainage (SWED) sub-project under Southern Province Rural Development Project (SPRDP) was implemented in 1996, in order to solve the salt-water intrusion problem in paddy cultivation in Mattegoda Yaya.

Mattegoda Yaya was selected for the study considering the extent of 300 ha. Of land abandoned and its potential for higher paddy yield. The study attempts to ascertain the present status of paddy farming; to analyze the impacts of the project and to make recommendations. The primary data were collected through field visits, direct field observations, a field survey and Participatory Rural Appraisal.

Most of the farmers (68%) still use their own "Mattegoda Method" for paddy cultivation considering its higher comparative benefits of Rs. 2367. 29 /ha. However, the average yield has significantly increased from 581 to 1637 Kg. / ha. after implementing the project. As a result, extent of cultivated paddy lands particularly the holdings smaller than 0.5 ha. has increased by 19% while increasing the full- time farms by 9%Many farmers (61%) cultivate new paddy varieties without adopting fertilizer recommendations. Although 68% of the farmers use pesticides, only 35% use weedicides to control weeds in their paddy fields.

Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) score of 89 shows that the supply of improved seed paddy is the most important constraint for paddy production. Supply of inputs and provision of extension services are important institutional support needed for the farmers. According to the farmers, inappropriate plans (72%) and poor relations (24%) are the main limiting factors of the project. Although the farmers have a negative attitude towards farmer organizations, 76% of them believe that well-established, motivated and empowered farmer organization can manage the water and drainage system in order to reap higher benefits and economies of scale from Mattegoda Yaya.