

The homegarden farming system of Hambantota district : crop protection implications

Economy of Hambantota district is predominantly agricultural. A homegarden is both economic and social unit of farm families. The study mainly focused on the evaluation and identification of critical constraints as well as research needs the homegarden farming system of the Hambantota district.

A field survey of 60 homegardens in the Hambantota district was carried out. A structured questionnaire and informal discussion with households were used in the field survey to elicit primary data on households, structure of the farming system and agronomic activities.

The study revealed that about 80% households had homegardens smaller than a hectare and 25% of them had irrigated lands. Vegetable and pulses were the most important food and cash grown in homegardens. Results also revealed that 68% bush type and 62%

creeping type of low country vegetables, more than 50% pulses, fruit trees, timber and 8% various other crops such as shrubs and weeds were managed on the same piece of land to provide food, cash, medicine, shade, firewood, timber ect.

It was indicated that the use of external input in homegarden farming system was very high due to heavy and frequent applications of agrochemicals and the households practiced traditional farming with usual customs.

Less than 25% of households used organic fertilizer and more than 50% of them used inorganic fertilizers. Further the study revealed that households had used 100% chemical, 68% physical, 54% traditional, and 12% biological methods for controlling insect pests on legumes and vegetable. More than 60% households had used weedicides and fungicides for controlling weeds and pathogens. Traditional cattle/ goat keeping was confined only to 17% of the households.

Less than 7% households were poorly aware of IPM concept and 2% of the surveyed households reported better awareness of the IPM concept. The findings of the study indicated the constraints are serious insect pest and disease problems., custom of using agrochemicals, decreasing soil fertility, low producer price of cash crops, lack of farmer co-ordination, reluctance of farmers towards new concepts and non adoption of IPM.

The study also revealed that educational levels and knowledge of households and their actual farming practices are satisfactory.