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Evaluation and identification of critical constraints of homegarden farming system of the Matara District

Vegetable farming in Matara District confined to the traditional homegarden farming system. A homegarden is both economic and social unit of farm families in the district. This study mainly focused on the evaluation and identification of critical constraints of the homegrden farming system of the Matara District. A field survey fo 60 homegardens in Matara District was conducted in 1999. A structured questionnaire and informal discussion with households were used in the field survey to elicit primary data on households, composition of homegrdens, structure of the farming system and agronomic activities. This study revealed that about 85% households had homegardens smaller than a hectare and 10% of them had irrigated lands. Vegetable was the most important food and cash crop grown in homegardens. Results also indicated that 85% bush type and 75% creeping type of low country vegetables, 65% legumes, 10% fruit trees and other various crops such as shrubs and weeds were managed on the same piece of land to provide food, cash, medicine, shade, frewood and fertilizer. Less than

85% households used organic fertilizer and more than 70% of them used inorganic fertilizers. Further, study revealed that households used 100%chemical, 80% physical, 15% traditional, and 25% biological methods for control of insect pests on legumes and vegetables, More than 65% households used fungicides and 40% of them used weedicides for control of pathogens and weeds. Less than 10% households were poorly aware of IPM concept and 5% of the surveyed households reported better awareness of the IPM concept. The findings of the study indicates that identified constraints are serious insect, mite and nematodes pests, fungal and viral disease problems on food crops, custom of using agrochemicals, decreasing soil fertility, low producer price of cash crops, reluctance of farmers towards new concepts and non adoption of IPM