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### **Malpractice in pest management strategies adopted by farmers in Weligama area**

In Sri Lanka rural agriculture sector plays a key role in rice and vegetable cultivation and insect pest problem, which causes yield loss is a major issue. Most pesticides used by farmers are highly toxic. There is evidence that use of such chemicals cause major environmental problems as well as health hazards in man. Unawareness and ignorance of effective pest management strategies in insect pest management programs has become a major constraint in implementation of Integrated Pest Management Programs. Objective of this study was to find out farmers' knowledge on pest controlling practices and to find out major constraints in Integrated Pest Management. In our study a questionnaire was prepared to estimate the awareness of crop protection and pest management strategies adopted. Farmers in Weligama area were surveyed. Results clearly showed the over dependence on pesticides by farmers. Unawareness of their effects on environment, target species, non-target species and human health were major issues identified. It was revealed that over 60% of farmers use prophylactic treatments even before appearance of any pest. Seventy-percent of people have no knowledge on Economic Injury Level. Though 60% of farmers are aware of pesticides prepared from plants, they are reluctant to use them in pest management programs due to long preparation methods and late action. This has been a major constraint in implementation of biological methods in Integrated Pest Management programs. Most farmers are unaware of pesticide toxicity and pesticide safety. It is clear that to promote and popularize Integrated Pest Management practices, farmer knowledge and attitude on safety of environment and other organisms should be improved.