

Factors determining peeling cost of cinnamon in Matara District

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Cinnamon peeling is a costly operation. Two-third of the production cost is involved in peeling since only skilled persons can undertake the job. The objective of the study was to identify differences of peeling cost in Matara District and factors governing it.

The study was conducted in Kamburupitiya, Mulatiyana, Weligama, Hakmana, Matara and Devinuwara Divisional Secretariat Divisions where cinnamon is mainly grown in the district. Fifteen households of cinnamon growers from each division totalling 90 were randomly visited and interviewed in the first quarter of 1999.

There was no uniformity of peeling cost across the district. The factors determining peeling cost were: types of cinnamon products made; ability to employ the peeler year round; maintenance status of the cinnamon cultivation and prevailing cinnamon prices.

Large cultivation owners (five acres or more) relied mostly on Galle District cinnamon peelers whereas others sought assistance from local peelers. Migrated peelers from Galle received one-third or 40% share of what they produced. A peeler has to produce minimum of five Kg to be entitled for these shares. If a peeler is a regular worker in the cultivation, he is paid a nominal daily wage of Rs. 80-125. This wage depends on the opportunity of working uninterrupted throughout the year. If a peeler is employed on daily-paid basis he is paid Rs. 250 with refreshments.

If cultivation is not maintained properly, a peeler can demand more (half of the share) and access and working in the cultivation are difficult. Cinnamon price is also an important determinant of peeling cost. A floor-price has been set to determine the peeling cost. On the basis of its fluctuation, peeling cost varied. This type of arrangement seemed to be an informal agreement between the peeler and the cultivator. Peeling of fine cinnamon is done on equal sharing basis irrespective of its prevailing prices.

Cultivation owners and their family members (including female members) in Mulatiyana area peel cinnamon on their own. Self-peeling should be promoted so that farmers can retain a substantial income with them. More training programmes have to be initiated to train potential peelers to undertake self-peeling to increase their profit margin.