

Characteristics of rice consumption in Sri Lanka with special reference to source of origin and preferred type

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Rice consumption in Sri Lanka has improved notably in the last few decades. Rice production provides livelihood to a large majority of the people and the structure of rice demand in the country with respect to the types of rice is unlikely to be met with imports. Addressing these issues needs to be done by studying the characteristics of the rice consumption in depth. Rice consumed has two origins as own produced or purchased from the market. Own produce rice is defined as rice produced in fields with the access to the spending unit.

Data from the consumer finances and socioeconomic Survey 1996/97 of the Central Bank of Sri Lanka were analyzed using tabular and graphical methods and income elasticity for each segment for different rice varieties were estimated. Preference of spending units to purchase types of rice, samba, parboiled rice and raw rice were also investigated on a zonal basis and on spending unit income basis. Findings were presented on a per-capita quantity consumed per month basis.

Per-capita monthly rice consumption increased with income till the monthly income of the spending unit reaches Rs.8250.00, and begins to decline thereafter. Share of samba in purchased rice increase consistently depicting a higher share of samba in purchased rice by consumers in higher income groups. Estimated income elasticity of Samba and Raw rice are positive while the same for parboiled rice is negative. Income elasticity of Samba (0.31) is higher than that of Raw rice (0.21). Raw rice accounts for a market share of 57% and 48% respectively in zones low country wet zone and irrigated dry zone areas indicating the access to all households to rice produced in the same areas. Parboiled rice dominates in the market of plantation areas accounting for 55 percent of the market. 52% of the market for Colombo City is accounted by samba and the income elasticity is 0.8 indicating the demand for high quality rice from high income consumers.

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