

Identification of crop priorities: use of participatory rural appraisal tools

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An investigation has been carried out to identify the crop priorities for *maha* and *yala* seasons for a water deficit (tank fed) village of *Tammannawa* in *Hambantota* district. Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) tools were employed during Nov – Dec, 2002 period for identification of crop priorities. As the farmers of this village have encountered serious water deficit condition, priorities for crop production also dependent on such adverse consequences.

The PRA exercises were launched with a group of twenty farmers. The alternative crops and the main factors (criteria) underling the selection of crops were identified separately for *maha* and *yala* seasons by the community. Next, a PRA tool, matrix ranking was employed to obtain the priorities among the alternative crops.

The results show that farmers pay attention to the factors such as lesser water requirement, higher income, shorter crop duration, quick cash income, food security, low production cost, etc. Based on such criteria, priority confined to gingerly, green gram, paddy, finger millet (*Eleusine coranana*), cowpea and ground nuts, respectively for Maha season and mae (*Vigna unguiculata*), sweet melon, chillies, yellow pumpkin (*Cucurbita maxima*), okra (*Hebiscus esculentus*) and cucumber, respectively for Yala season. Hence, it is important to concentrate on such crops in planning and implementation of agricultural extension programmes in the locations which prevail conditions same to *Tammannawa* in the future.