

Crop diversification of paddy lands under minor irrigation systems in the dry zone of Sri Lanka (A case study from Vavuniya district)

A Nanthakumaran*
School of Agriculture, Vavuniya.

Present Address: Vavuniya Campus of the University of Jaffna, Vavuniya.

Investigations were carried out on the agricultural economy of selected farm households in Vavuniya district with the objective of identifying strategies for increasing profitability of *Maha* paddy and also to understand the important constraints to crop diversification in these paddy lands. A survey was conducted among 114 farm households under 10 randomly selected Minor Irrigation Tanks (MITs) during July to December, 1998 using a structured questionnaire. Secondary data were also obtained from various governmental and non-governmental institutions on technical, economic and social aspects of cultivation of paddy and Other Field Crops (OFCs) important to this district.

Investigations revealed that profits from cultivation of paddy during *Maha* ranged between Rs 7700 – 13900/ ha. During *Yala* season, most farmers (around 76%) were reluctant to cultivate rice due to high risk of water shortage and low profitability. Although green gram, black gram, groundnut and red onion when cultivated in these fields after *Maha* paddy cultivation give high profits of Rs 21900, 22600, 31200 and 51000 per ha respectively, only less than 10% of the total extent was diversified with these OFCs during *Yala* 1997. This is attributable to improper selection of lands and planting time, poor credit and storage facility as well as lack of timely availability of labour. Productivity models have also been projected for *Maha* paddy yield as well as for net income from paddy land by adopting crop diversification. Vavuniya District with about 60% of its 20000 ha of paddy lands being under the MITs offers great scope for crop diversification, particularly with legume crops and thereby to increase the profits of households by two or three fold compared with the income from paddy alone.

*rusifood@eureka.lk

Tel: 024 2220179