

Knowledge levels on innovations and marketing aspects among coffee farmers in the Central Province of Sri Lanka

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The study examines knowledge levels of coffee farmers in the Central Province on general knowledge on coffee planting and its main technological innovations, subsidy scheme and marketing aspects. Association between total knowledge score and variables was also studied.

The study was conducted in the main coffee growing districts of the Central Province in Kandy and Nuwara Eliya. The number of Extension Officer (EO) ranges of the Department of Export Agriculture (DEA) in Kandy and Nuwara Eliya are 17 and six respectively representing 3:1 ratio. By maintaining the above ratio six EO ranges from Kandy district and two ranges from Nuwara Eliya were selected randomly for the study. Hundred and five farmers from Kandy and 35 farmers from Nuwara Eliya were selected randomly. General knowledge on coffee planting; knowledge on the three main innovations: fertilizer application, coffee pruning and shade regulation; subsidy scheme (this offers by the DEA by means of planting material, fertilizer and non-recoverable cash); measures related to coffee prices and marketing were included for knowledge measurement. Knowledge items were selected for each parameter and presented to a panel of knowledgeable judges comprising of 23 individuals and were retained for knowledge measurement if selected by more than 50% of judges. Seven knowledge items were included except in coffee pruning and items related to coffee marketing, in all the other indicators. Thus each parameter scored 10 marks for its items. The score range common to all the knowledge measures was 0-10.

The highest knowledge score was observed for shade regulation (4.49) followed by general aspects on coffee cultivation (4.28), coffee pruning (3.97), fertilizer application (3.27), marketing aspects (2.42) and subsidy scheme (2.22). Farmers' total knowledge of the all six knowledge measures falls between 0-55. Mean of the total knowledge is 20.65 indicating farmers have less than half of the total possible knowledge. Land area, education level of farmers, source of advice and adopters have significant associations with total knowledge. Owners of cultivations of half acre or more; farmers who have educated up to GCE (OL) or above; farmers who relied on EO for advice and high adopters of innovations have high total knowledge. The coffee growers have to be educated on marketing aspects and the maintenance activities to become successful growers in the Central Province.

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