

A comparison of cinnamon industry between Matara and Matale districts

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The study compares the present status of the cinnamon industry between Matara and Matale. Thirty cinnamon growers from each district were interviewed and in-depth discussions were held with stakeholders on the agronomic practices adopted, harvesting and curing operations and trade activities. The practices more than a half of the cinnamon farmers adopted were considered significant to the district.

Matale farmers preferred wider cinnamon plant spacing to accommodate more plant species. Matara farmers applied chemical fertilizer whereas Matale farmers relied on recycling leaf matter. Matara farmers have realized the adverse effects of shade while their counterparts in Matale have not. Larger farmers in Matara resorted to have chemical weeding while Matale farmers practiced manual weeding with wider intervals. Training and pruning activities, started right from the early growth of plant in Matara whereas these activities were delayed until the first harvesting in Matale. Both Matara and Matale farmers preferred migrated peelers from Galle district. Self-peeling and involvement of family members including females in the peeling job were on the increase in Matara. Youth involvement in cinnamon peeling was substantially high in Matale. The peeling cost in Matara was usually one-third of the income. It was always fixed at 50% in Matale. Additional cost of carrying charges of cinnamon sticks and a hidden cost of sharing the food expenses of the peeler were burdens to the cinnamon growers in Matale. In Matara both fine and coarse cinnamon products were made depending on the harvesting frequency. The products made in Matale were coarse cinnamon due to extended harvesting intervals, high shade and waiting period until southern peelers to come. Ad-hoc peeling, manipulation of peeling by applying urea and committing malpractices were seen only in Matara. Matale cinnamon was free of bark diseases and comparatively more attractive. Cinnamon marketing process was organized and producers have more avenues to sell their products in Matara whereas in Matale it was less competitive and operated via mobile collectors and migrated cinnamon peelers. Opportunities exist for trading cinnamon products in Matale as organic due to its less dependency on agrochemicals. However, Matale cinnamon needs systematic maintenance. A competition should be created while self-peeling be encouraged to fetch fair price for Matale products. Quality improvement and prevention of malpractices are the requirements to improve Matara cinnamon.

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