

Status of pesticide usage in Southern coastal belt in Sri Lanka

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Pesticides usage in agricultural crops has increased tremendously in recent years in many parts of Sri Lanka. This has coincided with a significant increase in the recorded numbers of patients with diseases related to soil and water pollution. Lack of knowledge on the fate and behaviour of pesticides in Sri Lankan environment has contributed to such public perceptions.

Matara district has high agriculture potential areas. Both short term and long-term crops are cultivated which consumes pesticides and fertilizers heavily in the district. Farmers in this area are used to apply high amounts than recommended agrochemicals. This study was carried out to understand the

farmer's knowledge on crop types, pesticide circulation and pesticide handling in selected areas in *Matara* district.

Fifty farmers were selected randomly from seven *Grama Sewa* divisions in *Denipitiya* and *Dickwella* areas. They were interviewed using a prepared questionnaire.

Rice is the most common crop in *Dickwella*, where as Brinjol was the most abundantly growing crop in *Denipitiya*. In addition Pumpkins, Bitterguard, Okra, Snake Guard, Curry chilies, Raddish and Mukunuwenna are heavily cultivated in *Denipitiya* area.

Chloropyrifos (insecticide) (46.67%), propineb (fungicide) (33.33%) and carbofuran (insecticide) (13.34%) were the most commonly used pesticides by the farmers in *Denipitiya* area. Bispyribac sodium (76.19%) and thibencarb propynyl (76.19%) were the highly consumed weedicides ,fenobucarb (33.34%), fipronil (23.80%) and carbofuran (19.04%) were the intensively used insecticides in *Dickwella* area.

When the total usage of agrichemicals are concerned, high consumption of insecticides and fungicides were found in *Denipitiya* area where vegetable cultivation is prominent. The usage of weedicides is considerably high accompanying with insecticides in *Dickwella* area where rice is grown.

Farmers in *Denipitiya* use shallow wells or tube wells and in *Dickwella*, canal irrigation system, which originated from Rathmalae reservoir, is used for cultivations.

In both areas the knowledge of farmers on pesticides is very weak and also they use poor handling techniques. Hence they use overdoses and this may lead to contaminate soil and surface and groundwater to a considerable extent in both areas.

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