

Economic valuation of home gardens of wet zone

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Home gardens are widespread in the agro-forestry systems throughout the country. They play an important role in the household economy both in the dry zone and the wet zone. Of them the wet zone is a highly populated area in which a higher percentage of home gardens are also present. Also the wet zone home gardens are crucial ecosystems and are being depleted rapidly as they have not received the attention of the economists except for the Kandyan forest gardens. This study was carried out in order to estimate the economic value of home gardens in the WL -3 agro ecological region.

94 home gardens were selected randomly within the Gampaha and Colombo districts for the survey. A survey was carried out canvassing a questionnaire to collect information from the sampled home gardens. Information on the size of the home gardens, crop types, their extent, age and yield were collected for the estimation of the economic value of the home garden. Information on the respondents' socio economic characteristics was also collected. In order to find out the prices of the home garden produce a market survey was conducted in the area. The contribution of socio economic factors to the economic value was found out by a multiple regression analysis.

According to the results obtained, the mean economic value for a home garden is Rs.74,190 per annum whereas the mean economic value of the output per hectare per annum is Rs.418,228. Sizes of home gardens range between 0.05-0.80 ha. The composition of the crop mix varied according to the time period the residents have been living within the home garden. Results of the regression analysis showed that the socio economic factors such as duration of residence of the respondents' within the home garden, size of the home garden, maintenance cost, monthly income from employment and labour hours spent for the garden significantly contribute to the economic value of the home garden.

The results highlighted the importance of the home garden system in the WL3 agro ecological region for the household economy and the significance of recognizing that value in making decisions regarding home gardens.

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