

## **Employability of food science and nutrition graduates and relevance of the degree programme in their performance in job and real life**

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Although the employment rate of Sri Lankan graduates in general has been estimated at 88% still the employability of the graduates is a burning issue in Sri Lanka. The Food Science and Nutrition degree programme offered by the Faculty of Livestock, Fisheries and Nutrition at Wayamba University of Sri Lanka has been implemented since 2001. This contains a number of course modules in the study disciplines of food science, applied nutrition, livestock sciences, aquaculture and fisheries. One full cycle of implementation of the curriculum was completed in 2006.

In the present study fifty-two graduates representing all specialization streams were surveyed to determine the employment rate and average job seeking time, to identify major graduate employment categories, to identify their job responsibilities at the place of work and to assess the relevance of the food science and nutrition degree programme in their job performance and real life.

The employment rate of the food science and nutrition graduates was 86% where as the average job seeking time was two months from the completion of the degree. Most of the graduates were employed in the area of quality assurance (34%). The probable reason behind the higher employability in this category is the government policy changes to cater to the emerging requirements of the European Union with respect to the imported food items. Other major job categories in which the graduates were employed include non government organization and extension services sector (17.5%), marketing (12%), farm management (6%) and dieticians/health councilors (5%). Sixty percent of the respondents were employed in the areas which are not directly related to their specialization stream. The job responsibilities common for most of the job categories include maintenance of quality assurance aspects, staff training, work supervision, laboratory testing and supportive role in administrative functions. The respondents believed that most of the compulsory courses in the curriculum including the basic courses offered during first two years were more helpful in performing their job responsibilities effectively. They believed that the courses on human nutrition were important in their real life. They found the supplementary courses such as information technology, statistics and mathematics, English language, etc. have a higher influence in performing the responsibilities of the job as well as in their day to day life.

It is recommended to consider the outcomes of the present survey in the future curriculum revision of the faculty. Also the outcomes will be useful in deciding the direction of future degree programmes in the biological steam.

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