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Perception of Tea Growers on TRI 3000/4000 Series New Tea Clones

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Tea industry is a vital component of the Sri Lankan economy with its contribution to the foreign exchange earnings and employment to the Sri Lankan labour force. Tea Research Institute (TRI) has proposed technologies to increase the productivity. Development of new planting material is one such measure. TRI has first developed and released TRI 2000 series tea clones in 1960s and TRI released 3000 and 4000 series tea clones in 1980s and 1990s respectively. Despite efforts to establish and release clonal cuttings by the ADP funded Mother Bush Plantation Project they are still not popular among many tea growers, therefore, it is important to study the perception of tea growers on TRI 3000/4000 series clones. The objectives were to identify the characteristics of tea clones that growers look for, measure attitudes of tea growers on individual TRI 3000/4000 new clones and to make recommendations on how to improve the growers' perception on TRI 3000/4000 clones.

The target group for the study was tea growers from Up Country, Mid Country, Low Country and Uva regions, who have begun cultivating TRI 3000/4000 clones. Using the lists of new clone growers maintained at TRI Head Office and, four regional sub stations, out of about 400 growers 40 respondents including estate managers, private plantation owners, and smallholders were randomly selected for the study. Interview schedule was the main data collection tool. In addition, focus group discussions and key informant discussions with relevant scientist and extension officers were also used. Data analysis was mainly done using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) and rank correlation, Chi square was used to test the relationships.

Higher percentage of (61.5%) of estate managers perceived that yield is higher in TRI 3000/4000 clones. But 48.2% of private plantation owners and 34% of smallholders perceived that they give medium yield. Tea growers think that most TRI 3000 series clones are highly resistant to Shot Hole Borer (SHB) and also medium resistant to Blister Blight (BB) and drought. They also felt that TRI 4000 clones have medium resistance to SHB, BB and drought. But most growers perceived that both series have higher fertilizer response than older clones. Most of the respondents (64.3% plantation managers, 66.7% private plantation owners, and 71.4% smallholders) have medium level of perception on services provided by the TRI for their new clone cultivations.

The characteristics of TRI 3000/4000 clones which were found by TRI research are not compatible with growers' perceived characteristics. Therefore, it is suggested that to develop programs to inform tea growers the accurate information on TRI 3000/4000 clones.

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