

256/B

Need for an intensive extension approach to promote the cinnamon Industry in Matara district

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Cinnamon (*Cinnamomum zelanicum*), an indigenous spice in Sri Lanka, has decreased its total production, average yield and the extent of cultivation during the last two decades. Cinnamon is one of the major spices important in the export economy with more than 90 percent of the total production being exported. Cinnamon growers are not satisfied with continuing this crop, because profit is low due to very high land rents which is not matching with the opportunity cost of cinnamon cultivation, high marketing cost, poor marketing extension activities related to cinnamon quills production and lack of skilled labour for harvesting and processing. These have created an uncertainty regarding the future of cinnamon cultivation in Sri Lanka.

This study investigated into the relationship between extension activities and cinnamon quills production in Matara district. A field survey was conducted, using a structured questionnaire, covering 50 cinnamon farmers in three Divisional Secretariats of Hakmana, Kumburupitiya, and Mulatiyana in the Matara district, during 2007. Data collected was subject to descriptive and correlation analysis.

The study revealed that there were several problems faced by cinnamon farmers, such as use of inappropriate technology, traditional management of processing and grading, lack of market information to the growers, lack of knowledge about quality requirements, inadequate government subsidies and lack of entrepreneurial skills of the growers. Unskilled labour was a major constraint in producing quality cinnamon quills. Creating awareness of proper quality and sanitary standards, provision of necessary institution support and inputs, supply of subsidies credit facilities, strengthening the relationship between extension officers and farmers, motivate farmers to attend more farmer training classes and create farmer organizations are recommended to rejuvenate the cinnamon industry in Matara district.

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