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A study on harvesting behavior of clove

A P P Disna

Research Officer, Department of Export Agriculture, Peradeniya

Clove is a perennial spice crop mainly grown in central highlands of Sri Lanka. It is a traditional export commodity and Sri Lanka exported 2435.1mt. of clove in 2006 valued at Rs.mn.1265.4. Clove is largely grown as a home garden crop and harvesting is the only costly operation which needs skilled labor. To minimize harvesting cost clove farmers have adopted different strategies and the objective of this paper is to aware the harvesting and processing practices adopted by farmers. A survey was done in 2008 March in six villages of Kandy district and data was collected from a purposely selected sample of 85 farmers.

Clove harvest comes during February-April and the yield is an unopened flower bud which arises from the tips of side branches. Bunches of unopened buds with flower stems and two leaves are picked, remove leaves and stems and sun dried. For those operations farmers have adopted different practices. In the sample (1) 02 farmers harvested only by them selves (2) 02 had paid daily wage (3) 05 farmers had paid per kg of clove with leaves and stems (4) 09 farmers had paid per kg of clove with stems (5) 22 farmers had paid per kg of cleaned clove and (6) 12 farmers had leased their crop. Also (7) 11 farmers had practiced combination of 1st and 5th methods (8) 04 farmers had practiced 1st and 4th methods and (9) 03 farmers used 1st and 2nd methods. It was found that a laborer could harvest 20-30kg. of cloves per day with leaves and stems, 15-25 kg of clove only with stems and 15-25 kg of cleaned cloves. Payments for harvesting of kg of clove with leaves and stems was 40-50 rupees while the same for kg of clove with stems and kg of cleaned clove ranged from 50-60 and 70-80 rupees respectively. Therefore average labor earnings from clove harvesting varied from Rs. 1000-2000 per day and it was higher than a normal market wage rate. When clove is harvested with leaves and stems additional labor is required for cleaning and mostly the family labor was used by small holders. In large holdings, women were paid Rs.30-40/kg to remove leaves and stems and an average worker had cleaned 2-4kg/day. When leased, buyers of raw crop had employed outside laborers or done the job by them selves. In the second method pickers had earned much higher profits than they earn from laboring. Drying was largely done by the family labor and when employed they were paid on daily basis or per kilo basis. Harvesting cost had accounted half of the raw price of clove which ranged from Rs.155-175/kg. To fulfill high liquid cash needs for harvesting some farmers had sold total harvest or part of their harvest. Study concluded that harvesting is a costly operation and more efficient and cost effective method must be invented for clove harvesting.

*pd1795@yahoo.com

Tel: 081-2388651