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Factors underpinning the intensity of banana intercropping in rubber smallholdings in Sri Lanka

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Rubber, being a perennial crop, is having a long gestation period of ca. 6 years causing significant problems to resource poor smallholder farmers. To overcome this problem and to increase the overall productivity, intercropping in rubber lands is practised. Considering the need, the Rubber Research Institute of Sri Lanka has issued a set of recommendations on suitable crops for intercropping in rubber lands. Among the rubber based intercrops, banana appeared to be a popular crop in most parts of the country. However, smallholder practices do not always go along with the recommendations, probably because the priorities of smallholders are different from what was met by those recommendations.

Therefore, the present study was carried out to characterize such social factors underpinning the level of intensity that banana being intercropped in smallholdings. For this purpose, 30 smallholders practicing rubber/banana intercrops in Kalutara, Ratnapura, Colombo and Kegalle districts were interviewed with a structured questionnaire and on-site observation on intercropping intensity was made.

The level of intensity of banana intercropping was directly related to three parameters, i.e. the extent of intercropping and the revenue & net profit from the intercrop. Therefore, three multiple regression models were run in order to identify different factors that contribute to above factors. These results imply that perhaps revising present incentives would be necessary in order to popularize banana intercropping among the rubber small holders in Sri Lanka.

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