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**Awareness and adoption of 'Golden Rules' in agrochemical usage:
a case of the paddy farmers in the Buttala area**

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Safety measures need to be adopted while using agro chemicals because of its hazardous nature. WHO has introduced five 'Golden Rules' (GR) viz., always read and understand the label information, handling chemicals carefully, maintain sprayers, practice good personal hygiene and always use appropriate protective clothes when buying, transporting, storing, applying and disposing of chemical wastes of agro-chemicals. Paddy cultivation is commonly recognized as a cultivation where there is intensive use of agro-chemicals. Therefore, this study attempted to ascertain the farmers' awareness, adoption and attitude toward 'GR' when using agrochemicals. Data were collected from the Buttala area in the Monaragala District. Ninety four respondents were selected randomly for a questionnaire survey. Awareness, adoption and attitudes on GR were measured by employing the indices. The data were collected with the help of an interview schedule. The descriptive statistics and correlation test were employed to analyze the data. The majority of the farmers fell into the moderate awareness group in respect to the buying (53 %), transporting (45 %), storing (57%), and applying (53%). In respect to adoption for each activity, the majority were in the moderate category on buying (55%), transporting (46%), storing (57%), and applying (60%). However, the majority of farmers were in the very low level on awareness (64%) and adoption (55%) with regard to the disposal of agrochemical wastes. Farmers' attitude towards the safe usage of chemical was not favourable because the direct impacts of safe usage of agrochemicals were not visible. Majority (76%) have neutral attitudes while 13% and 11% had poor and favorable attitudes. Those in the poor attitude group indicated that the special care of agrochemicals was additional work and cost for them. The group with attitudes indicate that safe usage of agro-chemicals at each step helps safeguard the health of both humans and the environment. Awareness and adoption were significantly correlated ($r = 0.87$, $p = 0.001$). Further, the farmers' attitudes towards safe usage of agrochemicals has also shown a positive correlation ($r = 0.41$, $p = 0.001$) with adoption to GR. Farmers' education and farming experience showed a positive correlation with the awareness and adoption attitudes. These findings clearly imply that paddy farmers are still not following accurate guidelines for agrochemical usage. It is therefore, necessary to take appropriate steps viz., conduction awareness and training program etc to increase the farmers' awareness on the safe use of agrochemicals.