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Micro nutrient content of *Moringa oleifera* (Murunga) leaves from different agro-climatic locations in Sri Lanka

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Micronutrient malnutrition especially iron, zinc and calcium deficiency among children and pregnant mothers has become a major health issue in Sri Lanka at present. *Moringa oleifera* is an important multipurpose tropical tree under-recognized for its nutritional properties. Latest research findings have shown that *M. oleifera* leaves are a rich source of micronutrients, specially needed during pregnancy and lactation. However, no study has been done in Sri Lanka to evaluate the micronutrient content of *M. oleifera* leaves. The objective of the present study is to analyze the iron, zinc, calcium, potassium and magnesium content in *M. oleifera* leaves collected from eight districts in Sri Lanka. The collected samples were dried, powdered, microwave digested (wet ashing) and were analyzed through Flame Atomic Absorption Spectrophotometer (FAAS) against the standard of each element. According to the data iron, zinc, calcium, potassium and magnesium (per 100 g dry powder) contents were in the range of 6-26 mg, 1-5 mg, 1100-1600 mg, 1600-2400 mg, and 290-818 mg respectively. Leaf samples collected from the Polonnaruwa District showed significantly higher ($p \leq 0.05$) values for iron, zinc and potassium content when compared with those from other districts.

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