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Awareness and adoption of farmers to golden rules of pesticide usage in Magastota, Nuwara Eliya, Sri Lanka

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Pesticide use in agriculture is a topic of considerable anxiety nowadays. Sprayed agrochemicals reach destinations other than their targets, including non-target species, air, water and soil. There is a high risk in pesticide usage due to their hazardous nature. Hence, safety measures should be adopted to minimize the risks. The objective of the study was to investigate the awareness and adoption on “Golden Rules” which are (1) exercise caution at all times (2) careful reading and understanding of label before use (3) practicing good personal hygiene (4) take care of and maintain application equipment and (5) wear appropriate personal protective clothing and equipment, in the area of Magastota, Nuwara Eliya, Sri Lanka. A field survey based on a pretested questionnaire was carried out by using randomly selected 40 vegetable farmers to find out the awareness and adoption to “Golden Rules” in five operations (in the operations of pesticide buying, transportation, storage, application and disposal). The survey results revealed that the farmers of Magastota were not aware of the “Golden rules”. However, they have practiced them without knowing. Furthermore, farmers showed a moderate level of awareness and adoption on the processes of buying (52%, 53%), transportation (43%, 46%), storage (57%, 57%) and application (59%, 59%) but low awareness and adoption on disposal (62%, 53%) of the total population. The risk of contamination was high due to careless disposal and therefore immediate awareness programs are required. According to the survey findings the pesticides were applied heavily because of the moist environment and elevated pest and disease problems. Therefore, there was a threat to the environment from application and disposal, by contaminated water sources and pasture lands. Promotion of extension services, farmer credit facilities to buy safe equipment, motivation of farmers towards integrated pest management and activation of regulations on pesticide usage are needed to protect the public from hazardous agrochemicals.

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