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**A study on tappers' perceptions on discontinuation of sap flow of kitul (*Caryota urens*)**

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Kitul sap is extracted from immature inflorescence after seasoning it to make a variety of products such as treacle, jaggery and toddy. Discontinuation is abrupt termination of sap flow of a tapping inflorescence. Therefore, time and energy spent on seasoning of the inflorescence are wasted and the income of the family is unexpectedly reduced. The objective of the study was to identify reasons for discontinuation of sap flow.

A questionnaire survey was conducted in 12 kitul growing districts (Kandy, Matale, Badulla, Matara, Nuwara Eliya, Kurunegala, Ratnapura, Galle, Kegalle, Moneragala, Hambantota and Kalutara) to collect data. A multi-stage stratified sampling scheme was adopted for data collection. Three hundred and four tappers were included in the sample. Ninety two percent of the respondents had experience about discontinuation of sap flow. Discontinuation can be attributed to improper seasoning of inflorescences (53%), mechanical and pest damages (25%), inclement weather conditions (25%) and inherent characteristics of tree (17%). Some respondents had given more than one reason for this phenomenon.

Use of excess quantities of seasoning mixtures damaged the tissues of inflorescences while inadequate doses of the same enhanced its maturity inducing discontinuation. Movement of monkeys and wildcat damaged the inflorescence and terminated sap flow. High intensity, persistent rains and dry periods induced discontinuation. Of the four causes of discontinuation of sap flow, except for one (i.e. improper seasoning of inflorescences), the others cannot be manipulated. However, seasoning of inflorescence is the most important factor and its defects cause discontinuation of sap flow. This had been observed by more than 50% of the respondents. Therefore, appropriate seasoning methods and seasoning mixtures have to be used to minimize this problem.

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