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Patterns and determinants of household vegetable consumption: A case study in the Udapalatha DS area in Kandy District, Sri Lanka

W S P Chandrasena and Parakrama Weligamage*

Agricultural Economics and Business Management, University of Peradeniya, Peradeniya

Vegetables are considered a main component of healthy human diet. Understanding determinants of household demand for vegetables are important in planning production and supply and to effectively target nutrition interventions. The objectives of this study were to a) identify the patterns and b) the effect of social and demographic characteristics on vegetable consumption levels in households in villages from the Central Province of Sri Lanka. Three study villages, Sinhapitiya North, Godagama and Rathmalkaduwa were randomly selected. Thirty households each were selected randomly from each study village. Data on socio-economic and demographic factors, and consumption and expenditure patterns of households based on one-week recall were collected using a structured survey schedule. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics to understand consumption patterns. Linear regression analysis was used to explain relationships between the per-capita weekly vegetable expenditure and socio-economic and demographic characteristics of households. According to the results, mean weekly household expenditure for vegetables by households in the study area is LKR 640.89. Respondents indicated price, nutrition value and family preference as the most important factors that influenced the buying decisions of vegetables. Mean per capita daily vegetable consumption is 111 g. Average number of daily meals with vegetables is less than three indicating that households do not consume vegetables for all three main meals. Households reported consuming 20 types of local vegetables and 10 types of exotic vegetables. Sixteen percent of all weekly vegetable meals are generated from their own home gardens. Econometric model is statistically significant with F value of 14.42 and R² value of 0.67. Per-capita vegetable consumption expenditure decreases with increasing household size. Education level of the household head, presence of elders in the family, working mothers, and household well-being Index, a constructed index using availability of household assets, have a positive significant influence on per capita expenditure. Increasing expenditure on vegetable substitutes reduces expenditure on vegetables. Results of this study would be useful for food producers, marketers and policy makers to identify and plan target interventions on vegetable production and consumption.

Keywords: Dietary diversity, exotic and traditional vegetable, home garden produce, market purchases, multiple regression analysis