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Factors influencing the choice of organic and non-organic farming among spice growers in Kandy District

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The realization of the importance of organic produce has caused a rapid growth in demand over the past two decades. Despite government efforts at promoting organic agriculture with favourable policy changes and promotions, still very few farmers in Sri Lanka are involved in organic agriculture. Previous studies have shown that farmers choose to adopt agricultural practices for a variety of reasons. But very few studies have focused on understanding local farmer motivating factors related to adoption of organic farming practices. The study utilizes the binary logistic modelling to analyse determinants of the decision to adopt organic farming. Motive factors and attitudes are measured using scales and ranking systems. The research was conducted as a cross sectional study with a pre-tested interview schedule administered to organic and conventional spice farmers in the Kandy district. A sample of sixty farmers was used in the study. The results indicate that organic farmers, compared to their conventional counterparts, are more likely to be older, more educated, have more interactions with local organizations, and are part time farmers. The study also indicates that organic farmers are mainly driven by perceived health benefits of adopting organic agriculture while conventional farmers have stronger economic motivations. Exploration of attitudes of farmers shows that conventional and organic farmers have significantly different attitudes towards their respective agriculture practices. Results can be utilized by extension services to create better extension programmes to promote organic farming in an effective and efficient manner. Also the results suggest the importance of consideration of non-economic aspects of farmer motivation explored in this study, when formulating policies to increase the adoption of organic agriculture in local farming communities.

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