



Section F

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Small-scale farmer perception on organic farming in Anuradhapura District

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Chronic Kidney Disease (CKD) has become a life threatening health issue in the dry zone of Sri Lanka. Many argued on its root causes and eventually accepted that the usage of water contaminated with hydro chemicals released from agricultural lands as harmful. Simultaneously, the concept of organic agriculture became popularized, thus a conversion from chemical based agriculture to environmental friendly organic farming is being promoted. This study was designed to assess the perception on organic farming in Anuradhapura District, which is one of the major districts affected by CKD. The research was carried out in four Divisional Secretariat Divisions (DSD) in the Anuradhapura District namely: Kahatagasdigiliya, Rambewa, Elayapaththuwa, and Anuradhapura. Simple random sampling technique was adopted to select 20 small-scale farmers from each DSD (n = 80). A semi-structured questionnaire survey and key informant discussions were carried out to glean primary data. Records at Agrarian Centers, journal articles, and other literature sources were referred for secondary data. 61% acceptability of organic farming, unawareness on organic agriculture practices (80%) and organic certification system (96%) was reported. Organic farming is still unpopular due to lack of market opportunities and asymmetrical information dissemination. This has brought the thought of “my farm is not suitable for organic farming” for 62 farmers from the sample. Key informants highlighted the potential to be successful in organic farming. Thus, attitude change of farmers is crucial to promote organic farming because they lack understanding about the potential. However, the gaps in knowledge dissemination and market information hinder the success in the sector. Knowledge/experience sharing sessions *via* farmer organizations was suggested as a pragmatic solution in popularizing organic farming among small-scale farmers. Awareness campaigns and demonstrations ranked as the most important strategies to enhance the perception of small-scale farmers in rural Anuradhapura.

Keywords: Organic farming, farmer perception, small-scale farmers

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