
Strengthening the Food System in Sri Lanka to Overcome the Food Crisis

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A Food System comprises a complex set of activities, interactions and actors along the food value chain involving production, aggregation, processing, distribution, consumption and disposal of food products. These food products could originate from agriculture, forestry or fisheries, and parts of the broader economic, societal and natural environments in which they are embedded. Sustainability of a food system is focused on simultaneously generating positive values along the three dimensions, namely, economic, social and environmental. The challenges are multiple and multi-faceted, especially for countries like Sri Lanka, to make the food system more climate resilient, more productive and to make it more inclusive of poor and marginalized populations than the current scenario. The food systems link the cities with rural areas within a country, and operate in a complex operational setting with many actors, under many scenarios such as COVID-19 pandemic, variable and changing climate, man-made food crisis due to imposition of irrational policy decisions (e.g. the policy decision taken to ban the importation of synthetic fertilizer and pesticides), etc. Therefore, the vulnerabilities, weaknesses and strengths of food systems operating within geographic regions of Sri Lanka is a need by tracing food flows to help strengthening local food systems by eliminating inefficiencies in different operational nodes. Tracing the flows and sources of food (food flow analysis) is an important way of identifying food system activities taking place within city region boundaries and obtaining a sense of food system vulnerabilities, weaknesses and strengths. The path that food flows from production to consumption, and waste disposal, is important to determine where the potentially significant inefficiencies would occur. At each operational step in the flow, active management of food preparation and processes is an essential part of business operations that will strengthen the rural-urban connectivity in terms of food production, value addition, and food supply. Sri Lanka needs results of such scientific efforts to provide unique insights into the debates surrounding the sustainability of production and consumption at multiple scales.