

## ABSTRACT

*The present study was carried out in the Matara District to understand the knowledge and attitude on pesticide application by commercial leafy vegetable, vegetable and paddy growers. All Agricultural service centers in the district were selected as the main experimental sites. The study was carried out using pretested questionnaire and secondary data collected from state institutions. Details were collected from 45 leafy vegetable farmers, 50 vegetable farmers and 75 paddy farmers. Proportionate sampling technique was employed to select farmers. Primary data were collected using a structured questions and through focused group discussions with agricultural instructors, representatives of farmer organizations and pesticide dealers. Descriptive and inferential statistics were mainly employed to draw conclusions. In pest and disease management, the highest percentage of farmers used synthetic chemicals and a few farmers used both synthetic chemicals and botanical pesticides. Higher percentage of farmers always applied pesticides prior to the appearance of any symptoms of pest or disease as a precautionary measure. The percentage of pesticide overdosing farmers was 71% in Matara District as they believe that recommendations and prescriptions given in the pesticide product labels are ineffective. About 49% of farmers wear protective garments during the pesticide spraying, but the use of boots and gloves are limited to 23% of the farmers. It was understood that most of the issues at the user's level are associated with inadequate awareness, poor attitudes and behaviors of farmers, weaknesses in pesticide residue detection system in food and government rules and regulations on pesticide usage. Thus, there is a need for strong awareness campaigns through all possible means to educate farmers on alternate pest management methods, harmfulness of chemical pesticides and change their attitudes and to empower the farmer organizations to tackle the issues at farm level.*

**Key words:** *Commercial, Matara District, Paddy, Pesticide, Vegetables*