
Farmers' Knowledge and Constraints for Moving Towards Organic Agriculture: A Study with Farmers in Matara District

A. Liyanage^a, G.C. Samaraweera^b and K.M.C. Tharupath^b

^a*Department of Agriculture Biology, Faculty of Agriculture, University of Ruhuna, Sri Lanka*

^b*Department of Agriculture Economics, Faculty of Agriculture, University of Ruhuna, Sri Lanka*

Corresponding author: anugaliyanage@gmail.com

Organic farming is a process of crop and livestock production without using pesticides, fertilizers, and genetically modified organisms. Organic farming is a holistic system intended to optimize the productivity and maintain ecosystem balance. The major aim of organic production is to develop enterprises that are sustainable with the environment. Developed countries are practicing organic farming in large scales though Sri Lankan farmers are not practicing it prominently. Sri Lankan farmers show bit reluctant to change their traditional cropping methods and fear to adopt new organic farming practices especially in rural areas. This is mainly due to lack of experience in thinking within the context of organic agriculture. In fact, lack of knowledge may inhibits this movement. Therefore, this study presents views of farmers about organic farming in Mirissa Agrarian Service division in Southern Sri Lanka. The major objectives of the study were to identify the current knowledge about organic agriculture practices among rural farmers, and recognize the constraints of adapting organic farming. Framer interviews and questionnaires were used to collect data by using stratified random sampling method to obtain a sample population that best represents the entire farmers' population. Twenty five (25) farmers were selected from six different Grama Niladari (GN) divisions as a representative sample. A total sample of 150 paddy farmers was selected from six different GN divisions in Mirissa agrarian service division. Descriptive and inferential statistical tools were used to analyze the collected data. According to the results, 46.3% of farmers have not engaged in organic farming activities during their crop cultivation period ever, while 41.5% of farmers have already experienced organic farming. Around 12.2% farmers did not know about organic farming in Mirissa area. Further, the study identified a non-significant difference ($p=0.065$) between the percentage of farmers practising organic farming and not practising organic farming in Mirissa division. When identifying the consequences of organic farming, 25% of farmers mentioned that high cost of organic farming prevent them from practising it. Compared to the chemical fertilizer to practise organic farming need a large amount of organic fertilizer to obtain the highest yield. Above 20% of farmers mentioned this as the reason for not practising organic farming in their cropping fields while, 10% of the farmers stated that lack of yield and scarcity of raw materials refrain them from practising organic farming. High amount of labour requirement and longer response time for organic fertilizer to decay, were identified as other reasons for not practicing organic farming in Mirissa area. As a conclusion, to promote organic farming among rural farmers and reduce the high cost, government subsidy scheme needs to be provided to farmers to adopt organic farming in their own fields.

Keywords: Constraints, Farmers, Knowledge, Organic farming, Rural