
Homegardens in Ampara district: A promising way to improve the food security of rural poor

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Rapid increase in population and urbanization coupled with climate change has major consequences for global food production and food security. Thus, Sri Lanka is no exception. The livelihoods of the rural poor in Ampara district had been affected by local war, tsunami and now by the COVID_19 pandemic. Homegardens were found to be one of the strategies to improve the socio-economic needs of the poor. This study was conducted, focusing on the contribution of homegardens towards improved food security and livelihoods of rural poor in Ampara district. Based on the number of homegardens, two divisional secretariat divisions were selected. And among them, hundred homegardeners were selected using the proportionate sampling. Primary data were gathered through personal interviews using the pretested questionnaire. The status of food insecurity was measured using the Coping Strategies Index (CSI) which was constructed based on the locally applicable coping behaviours. Results of the study revealed that out of the hundred surveyed families, only nine families were female-headed households, and the rest were male-headed households. From the sample, 11% had the education level up to tertiary level, while 59% had education level up to secondary level. Further, the study indicated that relying on less preferred and less expensive foods was common in most (89%) of the households followed by borrowing food or relying on help from a friend or relative (86%). It was interesting to note that none of the households sends their family members to beg. Further, a majority (59%) of the homegardeners were in moderate food-secure condition. Only 17% of the homegardeners were in food secure condition and the rest were in food-insecure condition. Results of the present study provide insight into the contribution of homegardens to food security during the pandemic situation. In the wake of soaring food prices, increased emphasis has to be given on promoting the homegardens for enhancing food security and livelihoods of poor.

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