

A Study to Access the Compliance on Safety and Quality Standards: A Case of Pepper Value Chain

M.S. Elapata^{1*}, D.A.M. De Silva¹, A.S. Karunarathne², M. Esham¹, I. Abeysinghe¹

¹Departement of Agribusiness Management, Faculty of Agricultural Sciences, Sabaragamuwa University of Sri Lanka

²Departement of Export Agriculture, Faculty of Agricultural Sciences, Sabaragamuwa University of Sri Lanka

Abstract

Sri Lankan pepper (*Piper nigrum*) is well known for its superior inherent property due higher piperine content and inherently rich oil and oleoresin content. Yet its exports are confined mainly for the Indian market where the market entry requirements were fragile. Sri Lankan pepper should explore the high-end markets to secure better returns to its value chain actors. Thus it was deemed appropriate to investigate on the compliance of pepper value chain actors on safety and quality standards and certification. This would help to identify the potentiality of Sri Lankan pepper to reach to high-end markets. The study was carried out in Matale, Kandy, Kegalle, Rathnapura and Badulla which were the main pepper growing areas. The sample consisted of 200 respondents including pepper growers, traders/collectors, and exporters. The data was collected through structured questionnaires, focus group discussions and in-depth interviews. The case study approach was adopted to study on each value chain actor. Further descriptive statistics were also used to analyse the study. The study revealed that the majority of the upstream growers and downstream exporters function independently and traders act as the dead bridge which links them together. Further, up and down streams behave defiantly on quality signals. Informal, unorganized, traditional upstream has marginally complied on quality signals due to inadequate awareness, lack of knowledge, training and skills development programs on food safety and quality in rural areas, high cost of investments for certification schemes, and access to technology. Prime concerns of the middlemen were profit orientation. Their attitudes and behaviour on safe and quality supplies were poor. The study revealed the exporters had a high compliance to quality and safety standards in contrast to farmers and the middlemen. However, the formal, organized downstream members were not maintaining healthy relationships with upstream. Thus, it is important to bridge the knowledge gap between the downstream and the upstream actors and to promote and establish a networking mechanisms for the institutions to share the responsibility to deliver effective services that could uplift the industry to sustain in highly competitive international markets.

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***Corresponding Author:** maheshwari.elapata@gmail.com