Plant Quarantine in Sri Lanka; Past, Present, Weaknesses and Opportunities

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Abstract

The National Plant Quarantine Service (NPQS) aims to prevent the introduction of alien pests into Sri Lanka, which may harm the flora and the environment of the country. The institute is located in Katunayake and headed by an Additional Director. There are four plant quarantine stations (PQS) at the entry points under NPQS. It has seven technical divisions and two supportive divisions where each division has a specific role. The objective of this exercise was to identify weaknesses of the present system and recommend future requirements and possible mitigation methods. This study was performed based on the SWOT analysis carried out where information obtained from NPQS publications, annual reports, formal discussions and group sessions with senior officers, officers in charge of plant quarantine stations (PQS), and other stake holders such as coconut research institute, export development board, etc. who has a knowledge on legislations and operational procedures. The main weaknesses identified were that there was no legal coverage for most of the activities carried out in compliance with international plant protection convention (IPPC) such as pest risk assessment and pest surveillance, stake holder role, responsibilities and rights. The Institute continuing its activities with limited skilled training staff as well as experiencing; limited fund allocations and lack of awareness programs are also among identified weaknesses. In order to mitigate these weaknesses, the amendment of quarantine act is necessary. A qualified staff recruitment procedure and scheduled staff training is a requirement to carry out efficient pest diagnosis, pest risk assessments, and other operational activities. The funds could be raised from the government and private sector partnerships for repairing and maintenance of laboratory equipment for high efficiency. Stake holder discussions and awareness programs are necessary to emphasis the importance of plant quarantine in Sri Lanka. Moreover, research need to be focused on pest diagnosis and surveillance to find out changes in pest biology, development of treatment standards, identifying alternatives for methyl bromide, and explore the efficient biological control strategies. Mitigation of these shortcomings may enhance the pest-free quality international agriculture trade and also minimize noncompliance rate. As a result, this provides opportunity to access new international markets and thereby increase our foreign revenue.

Keywords: Plant Quarantine, SWOT analysis

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