

Problems faced by Sri Lankan tea smallholders: A case study in Malwala GN division in Ratnapura district

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Abstract

The tea small-holding sector leads the industry by contributing 73% of the total tea production in Sri Lanka. Tea is one of the main sources of foreign exchange of Sri Lanka. From the global tea demand, Sri Lanka contributes 23%. Sri Lankan tea industry mainly divided into two parts as Plantation and tea small-holding sector. Hence one of the objectives of this study was to identify the problems faced by tea smallholders in Sri Lanka. The Tea Small Holding Development Authority has recorded that the tea small holding sub sector is being undermined by several factors. The most damaging problem is aging tea bushes. It will result to declining yield and low productivity. The annual replanting rate is 2%. The low replanting is a reason to environmental hazard also. Inadequate extension and training programs, climate change and inadequate credit problems are others problems which tea Small Holders facing. Since the above issues of tea smallholders directly effect on productivity and finally it will effect for the low income and low stand of living. The study was conducted in Malwala GN division of Ratnapura DS division with one hundred farmers selected from a random sampling method. Primary data was collected through a pre-tested questionnaire. Problems of tea smallholders were measured on 10 point scale. Respondents were asked to allocate 10 marks for the highly affected problem and 1 mark for the least affected problem. Data were analyzed by using descriptive statistical methods. According to the sample they have problems on lack of skilled laborers (78%), lack of extension services (65%), and lack of credit facilities (63%). The market fluctuations, pest and disease problems and especially transport problems are not major issues in this sample. Many of the farmers (85%) make planting materials for their own needs. Some farmers (44%) sell planting materials as an income source. In Ratnapura district adverse effect of climate on tea sector is not a significant problem. Government and all relevant authorities have to generate new policies to overcome lack of skilled labor, lack of extension facilities and lack of credit facilities issues.

Keywords: Credit facilities, Skilled labor, Sri Lankan tea industry, Tea small holders

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