

The role of quality standards and certifications to uplift the export fresh fruits sector in Sri Lanka

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Abstract

Sri Lanka produces around one million nineteen thousand metric tons of fruits annually, and the contribution of fruits to export market is indeed unsatisfactory because it contributes only 0.04% of the total world exports. Moreover, Sri Lanka exports to limited destinations with difficulties in meeting the stringent safety and quality requirements of importing countries. Our research focus was to determine the role of quality standards and certifications in export-oriented fresh fruits sector. A total of 30 fresh fruits exporting value chains that have registered in Export Development Board (EDB) was selected based on Colombo, Gampaha, Kalutara, Monaragala, Anuradhapura, Kurunagala, Hambantota and Matale districts. Key informant interviews, focus group discussions, and interviewer-administered questionnaires were used to collect primary data. Exporters were selected from purposive techniques. Intermediates and farmers were selected by using the snowball sampling technique. Descriptive statistics, frequency, chi-square and relative importance index were used as data analysis techniques. Results revealed that the majority of the Sri Lankan exporters use ISO 22000, HACCP and EU Organics and the majority of fruits exports more concentrate among the Middle East and Asian region while huge market opportunity is available in the EU market. In the fresh fruits exporting value chain, the awareness level of the upper stream is lower than the downstream. Intermediaries act as a barrier to adopting proper quality standards and certifications in the fresh fruits exporting sector in Sri Lanka. Less transparency in following proper quality standards and certifications requirements in the upper stream cause to limit the export market. Providing safety and quality standards and certification guidelines in local languages (Sinhala or Tamil) play a remarkable role to penetrate the knowledge level in the upper stream of the fresh fruits exporting sector. Further, maintaining proper traceability and transparency throughout the fruits export value chain increases the trust in the global market at the exporter level.

Keywords: Certifications, Export, Fresh fruits, Quality standards, Sri Lanka

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