

## **Comparison of extension provision for the smallholder and estate tea sectors in Sri Lanka**

by

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### ***ABSTRACT***

Tea is the main income earner from export crops in the economy of Sri Lanka. Twenty eight percent of the tea land belongs to smallholdings with 156,545 smallholders cultivating 61,371 ha or approximately one third of the area under tea. Compared to the estate sector the smallholder sector has extended over the past decades. However, production level is very low compared to the estate sector, because of a low rate of adoption of technologies. This study is concerned with the constraints on the adoption of innovations in the smallholder tea sector in Sri Lanka. Most of the information in the study is based on field survey data collected using questionnaires in contrasting villages.

The objectives of this research have been: (1) to compare the existing extension coverage by the relevant extension institutes to the smallholder and plantation tea sectors in Sri Lanka; (2) to compare the rate of adoption of innovations in the smallholder sector and the estate sector; and (3) to explore the constraints on adopting innovations in the smallholder sector.

Field investigations were carried out in central and southern Sri Lanka. Data were collected from smallholder tea farmers, estate superintendents and extension workers. The findings reached in this study include the following points. In comparison to the estate sector, extension coverage by the institution in the smallholder sector is inadequate. Tea Research Institute services to smallholders are negligible. The rate of adoption of innovations in the smallholder sector is far behind that of the estate sector. Major constraints in adopting innovations in the smallholder sector are: lack of capital, lack of knowledge, lack of inputs and problems of marketing. Those constraints are interrelated. There is evidence that the yield can be increased substantially if the extension services are further improved. However, extension alone cannot improve this sector. Extension needs support from other organizations involved in this sector to develop it as a system.