

OP 27 - Awareness on Risk of Using Agrochemicals among Farmers in Central Province, Sri Lanka

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Background: The use of agrochemicals instead of traditional organic farming methods to prevent infections and harmful pests in crops is on the rise. The farmers spend a lot of time exposed to these harmful agrochemicals. However, most of the farmers are not fully aware of the health risks and complications that pesticides can cause to them due to exposure to pesticides resulting from inadequate education, training and safety measures.

Objectives: The aim of this study was to identify health risk from use of agrochemicals and the methods of using them by farmers in the central province of Sri Lanka. Further, to assess the complications caused by use of agrochemicals and level of the first aid knowledge that farmers have to overcome harmful situations.

Methodology: A descriptive cross sectional study was done on farmers who are over 25 years of age, in the Central Province, Sri Lanka. A convenient sampling was used for the study with a self-administered data collection form based on a questionnaire.

Results and conclusions: Of 94 farmers participated, majority was between in the age group of 35- 55. 78% of them were using fertilizers and 57% were using insecticides. 83% used back pack spray as the application method. Only 7% were using goggles and 65% who used personal protective equipment stated that they did not have any complications. Overall 78.7% of the farmers were aware about risks of agrochemicals whilst 39% of the farmers who had education only till grade five, were not aware of the complications for their health by agrochemicals. 50% of the farmers were suffering with headache, 44.7% had dizziness while 32.7% had eye irritation. 40% of the farmers, who use agrochemicals weekly, has got health complications. 41.9% of them use washing away the burned place with water as a first aid. Most of the farmers were aware about the risks of agrochemicals but they do not use protective measures to prevent health risks. The awareness about the first aid knowledge was low among the study group.

Keywords: Agrochemicals, complications, insecticides